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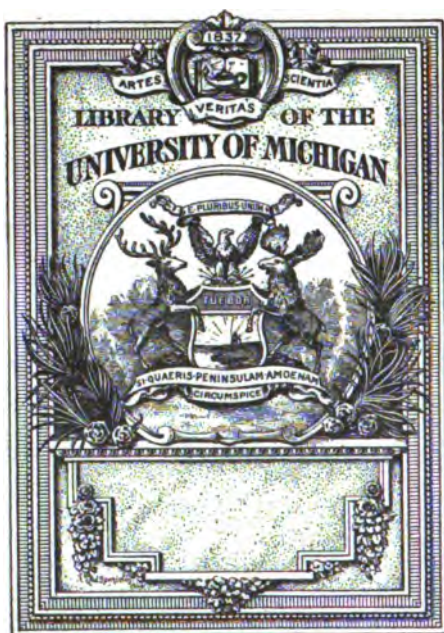
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"Laden with Golden Grain."

THE
ARGOSY.

EDITED BY

MRS. HENRY WOOD.

VOLUME XV.

January to June, 1873.

RICHARD BENTLEY & SON,
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 "In the Chapel Ruins."
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 "With a False Key."

By W. H. J. BOOT.

Eighteen Illustrations to GASTEIN PAPERS.



M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

EDMUND EVANS.

Mrs. Bent had returned to her shrimps when there entered one of the Grey Sisters.

THE ARGOSY.

JANUARY 1, 1873.

THE MASTER OF GREYLANDS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER I.

IN THE BANK PARLOUR.

STILBOROUGH. An old-fashioned market-town of some importance in its district, but not the chief town of the county. It was market-day: Thursday: and the streets wore an air of bustle, farmers and other country people passing and re-passing from the corn-market to their respective inns.

In the heart of the town stood the bank: opposite was the new market house, where the farmers' wives and daughters sat with their butter and poultry. For in those days—many a year ago now—people had not leaped up above their sphere; and the farmers' wives would have thought they were going to ruin outright had anybody but themselves kept market. A very large and handsome house, this bank, the residence of its owner and master, Mr. Peter Castlemaine.

No name stood higher than Mr. Peter Castlemaine's. Beginning in a small way in early life, he had risen by degrees to what he now was the chief banker in the county. People left the county-town to bank with him; in all his undertakings he was supposed to be flourishing; in realized funds a small millionaire.

The afternoon drew to a close; the business of the day was over; the clerks were putting the last touches to their accounts previous to departing, and Mr. Peter Castlemaine sat alone in his private room. It was comfortably and even luxuriously furnished for a room devoted solely to business purposes. The rich crimson carpet threw a warmth of colouring on the room; the fire flashed and sparkled in the grate; for the month was February and the weather yet wintry.

Before his desk, in a massive and luxuriant arm chair, sat Mr. Peter Castlemaine: a tall, slender, and handsome man, fifty-one years of age this same month; his hair dark, his eyes brown, his complexion yet

clear and bright. In manner he was courteous, but naturally silent ; rather remarkably so ; his private character unexceptionable.

The long table in the middle of the room was to-day more than usually covered with papers ; a small marble slab between Mr. Peter Castlemaine's left hand and the wall held sundry open ledgers piled one upon another, to which he kept referring. Column after column of figures : the very sight of them enough to give an unfinancial man the nightmare ; but the banker ran his fingers up and down the rows at railroad speed ; for, to him, it was mere child's play. But for that fact he might not have been seated where he was to-day, the greatest banker for miles round.

And yet, as he sat there his face presented a sad contrast to them and to the ease and luxury of the room. Sad, careworn, anxious, looked he ; and, as he now and again paused in his work to pass his hand over his brow, a heavy sigh escaped him. The more he referred to his ledgers, and compared them with figures and papers on the desk before him, so much the more perplexed and harassed did his face become. In his eyes there was the look of a hunted animal ; of a drowning man catching at a straw ; the look that must have been in the eyes of poor Louis Dixhuit when they discovered him in his disguise and turned his horses' heads backwards. At last, throwing down his pen, he fell back in his chair, and hid his face in his hands.

"No escape," he murmured, "no escape ! Unless a miracle should supervene, I am undone."

He remained in this attitude, for some minutes, revolving many things : problems working themselves in and out of his brain confusedly, as a man works in and about a labyrinth to which he has lost the clue. A small clock on the mantelpiece struck the hour, five, and then chimed an air once popular in France. It was a costly trifle that the banker had bought years ago.

The chimes aroused him. "I must talk to Hill," he muttered : "no use in putting it off till another day." And he touched the spring of his small hand bell.

In answer, the door opened, and there entered a little elderly man with snow-white hair, worn long behind, and a good-looking, fair, and intellectual face, its blue eyes beaming with benevolence. It was Thomas Hill ; for many years Mr. Peter Castlemaine's confidential clerk and right hand.

"Come in, Hill," said the banker. "Close the door—and lock it."

"The clerks are gone, sir ; the last has just left," was the reply. But the old man nevertheless turned the key of the door.

Mr. Peter Castlemaine pointed to a seat close to him, and his clerk, quiet in his movements, as in the tones of his voice, took it in silence. For a minute they looked at each other ; Thomas Hill's face reflecting the uneasiness of his master's. He was the first to speak.

"I know it, sir," he said, his manner betraying the deepest respect and sympathy. "I have seen it coming a long while. So have you sir. Why have you not confided in me before?"

"I *could* not," breathed Mr. Peter Castlemaine. "I wanted to put it from me, as a thing that could never really be. It has never come so near as it has come now, Hill; it has never been so real as at this moment of outspoken words."

"It was not my place to take the initiative, sir. I could but place facts and figures before you, compare past balances with present ones, other years' speculations with last year's, and—and give you the opportunity of opening the subject with me. But you never would."

"I have told you why, Hill," said Mr. Peter Castlemaine. "I strove to throw the whole trouble from me. It was a weak, mistaken feeling: but nine men of ten, would have been actuated by it under similar circumstances. And yet," he added, half in soliloquy, "I never was much like other men, and I never knew myself to be weak"

"Never weak; never weak," responded the faithful clerk, affectionately.

"I don't know, Hill: I feel so now. It has been to me long as a far-off monster, creeping onwards by degrees, advancing each day by stealthy steps: and now it is close at hand, ready to crush me."

"I seem not to understand it," said poor Hill.

"And there are times when I cannot," returned Mr. Peter Castlemaine.

"In the old days, sir, everything you handled turned to gold. You had but to take up a speculation, and it was sure to turn out a grand success. Why, sir, your name has become quite a proverb for luck. But for some time past things have changed, and instead of success, it has been failure. Sir, it is just as though your right hand had lost its cunning."

"Right, Hill," sighed his master, "my hand seems to have lost its cunning. It is—I have said it over and over again to myself—just as though some curse pursued me. If a scheme has looked fair and promising to day, a blight has fallen on it to-morrow. And I, like a fool as I see now, plunged into fresh ventures, hoping to redeem the last one. Were all disclosed, the public would say that the mania of gambling must have taken hold of me—"

"No, no," murmured the clerk.

"—When it was but the recklessness of a drowning man. Why, Hill—if I could get in the money, at present due to me, money that I think will come in, perhaps shortly, though it is locked up now, we should weather the storm."

"I trust it will be weathered, sir; somehow. At the worst, it will not be a bad failure; there'll be twenty shillings in the pound if they

will but wait. Perhaps, if you called a private meeting and pointed things out, and showed them that it is only time you want, they'd consent to let you have it. Matters would go on then, and there would be no exposure."

"It is the want of time that will crush me," said Mr. Peter Castlemaine.

"But if they will allow you time, sir?"

"All will not," was the significant answer, and Mr. Peter Castlemaine lowered his voice as he spoke it, and looked full at his clerk. "You know those Armannon bonds?"

Whether it was the tone, the look, or the question, certain it was that in that instant an awful dread, an instinct of evil, seized upon the old man. His face turned white.

"I had to *use* those bonds, Hill," whispered his master. "To mortgage them, you understand. But, as I am a living man, I believed when I did it that in less than a week they would be redeemed and replaced."

"Mortgaged the Armannon bonds!" ejaculated Thomas Hill, unable to take in the fact, and looking the picture of horror.

"And they are not yet redeemed."

The clerk wrung his hands. "My master! my friend and master! How could you? Surely it was done in a moment of madness!"

"Of weakness, of wickedness, if you will, Thomas, but not madness. You remember the large payment we had to make last August? It *had* to be made, you know, or things would have come to a crisis then. I used the bonds to raise the money."

"But I—I cannot comprehend," returned the clerk slowly. "I thought you' borrowed that money from Mr. Castlemaine."

"No. Mr. Castlemaine would not lend it me. I don't know whether he smelt a rat and got afraid for the rest I hold of his. What he said was, that he had not so large a sum at his disposal."

"These deeds must be redeemed!" cried the old clerk, rising from his seat in excitement. "At all sacrifice they must be got back, sir. If you have to sell up houses and land, they must be returned to their resting-place. You must not longer run this dreadful risk, sir: the fear of it would bring me down in shame and sorrow to my grave."

"Then, what do you suppose it has been doing for me?" rejoined Mr. Peter Castlemaine. "Many a time and oft since, I have said to myself 'next week shall see those bonds replaced.' But the 'next week' has never come: for I have had to use all available cash to prop up the falling house and keep it from sinking."

"You must sell all, sir."

"*There's nothing left to sell, Thomas,*" said his master. "At least nothing immediately available. It is *time* that is wanted. Given that I could put things straight again."

A trying silence : Thomas Hill's face was full of pain and dread. "I have a little money of my own, sir : some of it I've saved, some came to me when my brother died," he said. "It is six thousand pounds, and I have neither chick nor child. Every shilling of it shall be yours, sir ; as soon as I can withdraw it from where it is invested."

His master grasped his hands. "Faithful friend !" he cried, the tears of emotion dimming his brown eyes. "Do you think I would accept the sacrifice and bring you to ruin as I have brought myself ? Never that, Hill."

"The money shall be yours, sir," repeated the clerk firmly.

"Hush, hush !" cried Mr. Peter Castlemaine. "Though I were dying of shame and hunger, I would not take it. And, do you not see, my friend, that it would be a useless sacrifice ? Six thousand pounds would be but as a drop of water to the ocean."

It was so. Thomas Hill saw it. They sat down together and went into the books : the banker showing him amounts and involvements that he had never suspected before. The ruin seemed to be close at hand ; there seemed to be no possible way out of it. Common ruin Thomas Hill might have got over in time ; but this ruin would have turned his hair white in a night, had time not already turned it.

And crimes were more heavily punished then than they are now.

At a quarter to six o'clock, Mr. Peter Castlemaine was in his dining-room, dressed for dinner. He often had friends to dine with him on market-days, and was expecting some that night : a small social party of half a dozen, himself included. He stood with his back to the fire his brow smoothed, his aspect that of complete ease, for he could hear his butler coming up the stairs to show in the first guest. All the dwelling-rooms were on the first floor, the ground floor being entirely appropriated to business.

"Mr. Castlemaine."

The two brothers shook hands. Mr. Castlemaine was the elder by two years, but he did not look so, and there was a great likeness between them. Fine, upright, handsome men, both, with clear, well-cut features, and keen, flashing, dark eyes. Pleasant men to talk to ; but silent as to their own affairs. Mr. Castlemaine had just come in from his residence, Greylands' Rest. It was in contradistinction to him that the banker was invariably called Mr. *Peter* Castlemaine.

"All well at home, James ?"

"Quite so, thank you."

"You were not in at market to-day."

"No. Are you expecting a large party this evening ?"

"Only six of us. Here comes another."

The butler's step was again heard. But this time he came not to announce a guest but to bring a note. Mr. Peter Castlemaine's hand shook slightly as he opened it. He dreaded all letters now.

It proved, however, to be only an excuse from one of the expected guests : and a strange relief sat on his face.

"Lawrence can't come, James. So there'll be but five of us."

"Lawrence is not much loss," said Mr. Castlemaine, slightly. "You don't look quite yourself, Peter;" he added to his brother; something in the latter's countenance having struck his observant eye. "I doubt you are working too hard. Don't let the love of money take all pleasure out of life. Surely you must have made enough, and might now take some rest."

The banker laughed. "As to taking rest, that's easier recommended than done, James. I am too young to give up work yet : I should be like a fish out of water."

"Ah well—we are all, I expect, wedded to our work—whatever it may be : creatures of habit," admitted Mr. Castlemaine. "I will just go and see Mary Ursula. She's in her room, I suppose. What a treasure you possess in that girl, Peter !"

"Beyond the wealth of Solomon ; beyond all price," was the impulsive answer, and Peter Castlemaine's face glowed as he said it. "Yes, you will find her in her room, James."

The Master of Greylands went to the end of the wide and handsome passage, its walls lined with paintings, and knocked at a door there. A sweet voice bade him enter.

The small, choice room was brilliantly lighted with wax tapers ; the fire threw a warmth on its dainty furniture. A lady, tall, slight, and very beautiful, who had been working at a sketch, put down her pencil, and rose. It was Miss Castlemaine, the banker's only child : as fair a picture as could be found in the world. She wore a white muslin dress, made low, in the fashion of the day. On her neck was a string of pearls ; bracelets of the same clasped her arms. Her face was indeed beautiful : it was like her father's face, but more delicately carved ; the complexion was of a paler and fairer tint ; her brown eyes instead of flashing, as his did in his youth, had a subdued, almost a sad look in them. It was one of the sweetest faces ever seen, but altogether its pervading expression was that of sadness. She was now in her five-and-twentieth year. An accomplished lady was she, very much so for those days, and of great good sense ; her conversational powers rare ; a sound musician, and a fair linguist, fond of sketching and painting in water-colours. With it all, she was particularly gentle in manner, modest and retiring as a woman should be : at all times a repose upon her that was most charming. Her father loved her with an ardent love ; he had lost his wife, and this child was all-in-all to him. His happiest hours were spent with her. In the twilight he would linger in the music-room, listening to her as she sat at the piano, or at the sweet-toned organ he had had built for her—the tones not more sweet than her own voice when raised in song. Her gift of extem-

porising was of no mean order ; and as the banker sat listening to its sounds, its rise and fall, its swelling and dying away, he would forget his cares. She was engaged to William Blake-Gordon, the eldest son of Sir Richard Blake-Gordon, a poor baronet, unduly proud of his descent. But for the vast amount of money Miss Castlemaine was expected to inherit, Sir Richard had never condescended to give his consent to the match : but the young man loved her for her own sake. Just now Miss Castlemaine was alone ; the lady, Mrs. Webb, who resided with her as chaperone and companion, having been called away by the illness of a near relative. One word as to her name—Mary Ursula. A somewhat long name to pronounce, but it was never shortened by her relatives. The name had been that of old Mrs. Castlemaine, her grandmother, and was revered in the Castlemaine family.

"I knew it was you, Uncle James," she said, meeting him with both hands extended. "I knew you would come in to see me."

He took her hands in one of his and touched fondly her beautiful hair, that so well set off the small shapely head, and kissed her. Mr. Castlemaine was proud and fond of his niece.

"Your face is cold, Uncle James."

"Fresh with the out-of-door cold, my dear. I walked in."

"All the way from Greylands !"

He laughed. It was but three miles ; scarcely that. "I felt inclined for the walk, Mary Ursula. The carriage will come to take me home."

"Is Ethel well, Uncle James? And—and Mrs. Castlemaine?"

"Quite so, my dear. What are you doing here?"

She had sat down to the table again and he bent his head to look at her drawing. There was a moment's silence.

"Why, it is—it is the Friar's Keep!" exclaimed Mr. Castlemaine.

"Yes," she answered. "I sketched its outlines when at your house last summer, and I have never filled it in until now."

The resemblance was exact, and Mr. Castlemaine said so. "It seems to me already completed," he observed.

"All but the shading of the sky in the back-ground."

"Why have you made those two windows darker than the rest?"

Miss Castlemaine smiled as she answered jestingly: "I thought there should be no opportunity given for the appearance of the Grey Friar, Uncle James."

Mr. Castlemaine drew in his lips. The jest pleased him.

"Have you seen anything of the Grey Sisters lately, uncle?"

This did not please him. And Mary Ursula, as she caught the involuntary frown that knitted his bold brow, felt vexed to have asked the question. Not for the first time, as she now recalled, had Mr. Castlemaine shown displeasure at the mention of the "Grey Sisters."

"Why do you not like them, Uncle James?"

"I cannot help thinking that Greylands might get on better if it were rid of them," was the short reply of Mr. Castlemaine: but he passed at once from the subject.

"And we are not to have this fair young lady-hostess at the dinner-table's head to-night?" he cried in a different and a warm tone, as he gazed admiringly at his niece. "Mary Ursula, it is a sin. I wish some customs were changed! And you will be all alone!"

"'Never less alone than when alone,'" quoted Mary Ursula: "and that is true of me, uncle mine. But to-night I shall not be alone in any sense, for Agatha Mountsorrel is coming to bear me company."

"Agatha Mountsorrel! I don't care for her, Mary Ursula. She is desperately high and mighty."

"All the Mountsorrels are that—with their good descent and their wealth, I suppose they think they have cause for it—but I like her. And I fancy that is her carriage, stopping now. There's six o'clock uncle; and you will be keeping the soup waiting."

Six was striking from the room's silver-gilt time-piece. "I suppose I must go," said Mr. Castlemaine; "I'd rather stay and spend the evening with you. Fare you well, my dear. I will come and say good night to you before I leave."

As Mr. Castlemaine trod the corridor, he met Miss Mountsorrel coming up: a handsome, haughty girl in a scarlet cloak and hood. She returned his salute with a sweeping bow, and passed on her way.

The dinner was one of those perfect little repasts that the banker was renowned for. The three stranger guests were Sir Richard Blake-Gordon; the Reverend John Marston, vicar of St. Mark's and also of Greylands, generally called by the public "Parson Mas'on;" and Mr. Knivett, family solicitor to the Castlemaines. The wines were excellent, the reunion altogether sociable and pleasant; and the banker's brow gave no indication of the strife within. It is true Mr. Marston took his full share of the wine—as many a parson then appeared to think it quite religious to do—and talked rather too much accordingly. But the guests enjoyed themselves; and broke up before eleven. Mr. Castlemaine, who could drink his wine with any man, but took care never to take more than he could carry as a gentleman, proceeded to his niece's room to say good night to her; as he had promised.

"I hope I have not kept you up, my dear," he began as he entered.

"Oh no, Uncle James," was Mary Ursula's answer. "I never go to bed until I have wished papa good night."

"Where's Miss Mountsorrel?"

"The carriage came for her at ten o'clock."

"And pray where's Master William, that he has not been here this evening?"

Her face flushed with the question. "Do you think he is here *every*

evening, Uncle James? Mrs. Webb warned him that it would not be etiquette. How have you enjoyed yourself?"

"Passably. The parson took slightly more than was necessary of after-dinner port. What toast, do you suppose, he suddenly gave us?"

"How can I tell," she rejoined, looking up.

"We were talking of you at the moment, and the parson started up, his glass in his hand. 'Here's to the fairest and sweetest maiden in the universe,' said he, 'and may she soon be Lady Blake-Gordon!'"

"Oh, how could he!" exclaimed Miss Castlemaine, colouring painfully in her distress. "And Sir Richard present!"

"As to Sir Richard, I thought he was going frantic," pursued Mr. Castlemaine. "You know what he is. 'Zounds, Sir Parson,' he cried, starting up in his turn 'do you wish me dead? Is it not enough that the young lady should first become *Mistress* Blake-Gordon? Am I so old and useless as to be wished out of the world for the sake of my son's aggrandisement?'—and so on. Marston pacified him at last, protesting that he had only said *Mistress* Blake-Gordon; or that, if he had not, he had meant to say it. And now, good night, my dear, for I don't care to keep my horses standing longer in the cold. When are you coming to Greylands' Rest?"

"Whenever you like to invite me, Uncle James. I wish you could get papa over for a week. It would give him rest: and he has not appeared to be well of late. He seems full of care."

"Of business, my dear, not care. Though, of course, undertakings such as his must bring care with them. You propose it to him; and come with him: if he will come for anybody's asking, it is yours."

"You will give my love to Ethel; and——"

Mr. Castlemaine, stooping to kiss her, arrested the words with a whisper.

"When is it to be, Mary Ursula? When shall we be called upon to congratulate *Mistress* Blake-Gordon? Soon?"

"Oh, uncle, I don't know." She laughed and blushed at the outspoken words: but in her inmost heart was as happy as a queen.

CHAPTER II.

THE GREY LADIES.

A ROMANTIC, picturesque fishing village was that of Greylands, as secluded as any English village can well be. Stilborough was an inland town; Greylands was on the sea-coast. The London coaches, on their way from Stilborough to the great city, would traverse the nearly three miles of dreary road intervening between the town and the village, dash suddenly, as it were, upon the sea on entering the village, and then turn sharply off in its midst by the Dolphin Inn, and go on their

inland road again. As to London, it was so far off, or seemed so in those quiet, non-travelling days, that the villagers would as soon have expected to make a journey to the moon.

The first object to be seen on entering Greylands from Stilborough, was the small church ; an old stone building on the left hand, with its grave-yard around it. On the opposite side of the road the cliffs rose high, and the sea could not be seen from them. The Reverend John Marston held the living of Greylands in conjunction with St. Mark's at Stilborough : the two had always gone together, and the combined income was but poor. Mr. Marston was fond of fox-hunting in winter, and of good dinners at all seasons : as many other parsons were. Greylands did not get much benefit from him. He was non-resident, as the parsons there had always been, for he lived at St. Mark's. Of course, with two churches and only one parson to serve both, the services could but clash, for nobody can be doing duty in two places at once. Once a month, on the *third* Sunday, Mr. Marston scuffled over to Greylands to hold morning service, beginning at twelve, he having scuffled through the prayers (no sermon that day) at St. Mark's first. On the three other Sundays he held the Greylands service at three in the afternoon. So that, except for this Sunday service, held at somewhat uncertain hours—for the easy-going parson did not always keep his time, and on occasion had been known to fail altogether—Greylands was absolutely without pastoral care.

Descending onwards—an abrupt descent—past the church, the cliffs on the right soon ended abruptly, and the whole village, lying in its hollow, seemed to burst upon you. It was very open, very wide just there. The beach lay flat and bare to the sea, sundry fishing-boats being generally high and dry there : others were out at sea, catching fish. Huts and cottages were built on the side of the rocks ; and some few on the beach. On the left, looking straight across the wide road to the beach and the sea, stood the Dolphin Inn, past which the coach road branched off inland again.

The village street—if it could be called a street—continued to wind on, up the village, the Dolphin Inn making the corner, between the street and the inland coach-road. Let us follow this street. It is steep and winding, and for a short distance solitary. Half way up the ascent, on the left, and built on the sea-coast, rises the pile of old buildings called the Grey Nunnery. This pile stands back from the road across a narrow strip of waste land on which grass grows. The cliff is low there, understand, and the Grey Nunnery is built right at its edge, so that the waves dash against its lower walls at high water. The back of the building is to the road, the front to the sea. A portion of it is in ruins ; but this end is quite habitable ; and in it live some ladies, twelve, who are called the Grey Sisters, or sometimes the Grey Ladies, and who devote themselves to charity and to doing good.

In spite of the appellation, they are of the Reformed Faith strict, sound Protestants : a poor community as to funds, but rich in goodness. They keep a few beds for the sick among the villagers, or for accidents ; and they have a day school for the village children. If they could get better children to educate, they would be glad ; and some of the ladies are accomplished gentlewomen. Mr. Castlemaine, who is, so to say, head and chief of the village, looking down on it from his mansion, Greylands' Rest, does not countenance these Sisters : he *discountenances* them, in fact, and has been heard to ridicule the ladies. The Master of Greylands, the title generally accorded him, is no unmeaning appellation.

Beyond the part of the building thus inhabited, there ensues a portion that is in complete ruin ; it was the chapel in the days of the monks, but its walls are but breast high now ; and beyond it comes another portion, still in tolerable preservation, called the Friar's Keep. The Friar's Keep was said to have gained its appellation from the fact that the confessor to the convent lived in it, together with some holy men, his brethren. A vast pile of buildings it must have been in its prime ; and some of the traditions said that this Friar's Keep was in fact a monastery, divided from the nunnery by the chapel. A wild, desolate, grand place, looking over the turbulent sea. Tales and stories were still told of those days ; of the jolly monks, of the secluded nuns, some tales good, some bad—just as tales in the generations to come will be told of the present day. But, whatever scandal may have been whispered, whatever dark deeds of the dark and rude ages gone by, none could be raised of the building now. The only inhabited part of it, that occupied by the good Sisters, who were blameless and self-denying in their lives, who lived but to do good, was revered by all. *That* portion of it was open, and fair, and above board ; but some mysterious notions existed in regard to the other portion—the Friar's Keep. It was said to be haunted.

Now this report, attaching to a building of any kind, would be much laughed at in these later times. For one believer in the superstition (however well it might be authenticated) ten, aye, twenty, would ridicule it. The simple villagers around believed it religiously : it was said that the Castlemaines, who were educated gentlemen, and anything but simple, believed it too. The Friar's Keep was known to be entirely uninhabited, some of it abandoned to the owls and bats ; this was indisputable ; nevertheless, now and again glimpses of a light would be seen within the rooms by some benighted passer-by, and people were not wanting to assert that a ghostly form, habited in a friar's light grey cowl and skirts, would appear at the casement windows, bearing a lamp. Strange noises had also been heard—or were said to have been. There was not one single inhabitant of the village, man or woman, who would have dared to cross the chapel ruins and enter

the Friar's Keep after nightfall, though it had been to save their lives. It did not lack a foundation, this superstition. Tales were whispered of a dreadful crime that had been committed by one of the monks : it transpired abroad ; and, to avoid the consequences of being punished by his brethren—who of course only could punish him after public discovery, whatever they might have done without it—he had destroyed himself in a certain room in the grey habit of his order, and was destined to “come abroad” for ever. So the story ran, and so it was credited. The good ladies at the nunnery were grieved and vexed when allusion was made to the superstition in their presence, and would have put it down entirely if they could. They had never seen anything themselves, were never disturbed by sounds : but, as the credulous villagers would remark to one another in private, the Sisters were the very last people who would be likely to see and hear. They were too far removed from the other end for that, and the casements in the Friar's Keep could not be seen from their casements.

The narrow common, or strip of waste land, standing between the street and the Grey Nunnery is enclosed by somewhat high palings. They run along the entire length of the building, from end to end, and have two gates of ingress. The one gate is opposite the porch door of the Grey Nunnery ; the other gate leads into the chapel ruins. It should be mentioned that there was no door or communication of any kind between the nunnery and the site of the chapel, and it did not appear that there ever had been : so that, if any one required to pass from the nunnery to the ruins or to the Friar's Keep, they must go round by the road and enter in at the other gate. The chapel wall, breast high still, extended down to the palings, cutting off the nunnery and its waste ground from the ruins.

In their secluded home lived these blameless ladies. In a degree they served to replace the loss of a resident pastor. Many a sick and dying bed, that ought to have been Mr. Marston's care, had they soothed ; more than one frail infant, passing away almost as soon as it had been born, had Sister Mildred, the pious Superioress, after a few moments spent on her bended knees in silent, deprecatory prayer, taken upon herself to baptize, that it might be numbered as of the Fold of Christ. They regretted that the clergyman was not more among them, but there it ended : they paid him the utmost respect and encouraged others to do so ; and they were strict attendants at his irregular services on Sundays.

The origin of the Sisterhood was this. Many years before, a Miss Mildred Grant, being in poor health, had gone to Greylands for change of air. As she made acquaintance with the fishermen and the other poor families, she was struck with their benighted condition, both as to spiritual and temporal need. She resolved to do what she could to improve this ; she thought it a solemn duty laid in her path ;

and she took up her abode for good at one of the cottages, and was there joined by her sister, Mary Grant. In course of time other ladies, wishing to devote their lives to good works, joined them ; at length a regular Sisterhood of twelve was formed, and they took possession of that abandoned place, the old Grey Nunnery. Six of these were gentlewomen by birth and breeding ; and these six had brought some portion of means with them. Six were of inferior degree. These were received without money, and in lieu thereof made themselves useful ; taking it in turns to see to the housekeeping, to do the domestic work, go on errands, make and mend the clothes, and the like. All were treated alike, wearing the same dress, and taking their meals together—save the two who might be on domestic duty for the week. At first the Sisterhood had attracted much attention and caused some public talk—for such societies were then almost entirely unknown ; but Greylands was a secluded place, and this soon died away. Sister Mildred remained its head, and she was getting in years now. She was a clever, practical woman, without having received much education, though a lady by birth. Latterly she had been in very ill health ; and she had always laboured under a defect, that of partial deafness. Her sister Mary had died early.

Immediately beyond the Friar's Keep, the rocks rose abruptly again, and even the sight of the sea was there, and for some little way onwards, inaccessible. Further on, the heights were tolerably flat, and there the preventive men were enabled to pace—for those were the days of real smuggling, when fortunes were made by it and sometimes lives marred. The coast-guard had a dwelling-house or two just beyond the village, and they looked pretty sharply after the beach and the doings of the fishermen.

Just opposite the Friar's Keep, on the other side the road, was a lane, called Chapel Lane, flanking a good-sized clump of trees, almost a grove ; and within these trees rose a small, low thatched-roof building, the Hutt. The person inhabiting this dwelling, a slight, bronzed, active man of sixty, was a sailor named Teague. Formerly on board a man of war, he had saved enough for a competency through prize money and else, and had also a pension. The village called him Commodore : he would have honestly told you himself that he had no right to that rank—but he did not in the least mind the appellation. He was a vast favourite with the village, from the coast-guardsmen to the poor fishermen, fond of treating them in his Hutt, or of giving them a sail in the boat, or a seat in the covered spring cart—both of which articles he kept for pleasure.

Chapel Lane—a narrow, pleasant lane, with trees meeting overhead, and wild flowers adorning its banks and hedges in summer—led into the open country, and directly past Greylands' Rest, the residence of the Castlemaines. This lane was not the chief approach to the house : *that*

was by the high coach road that branched off by the Dolphin Inn. And this brings us to the Castlemaines.

Greylands' Rest, and the estate on which it stood, had been purchased and entered upon many years before by the then head and chief of the family, Anthony Castlemaine. His children grew up there. He had three sons : Basil, James, and Peter. Basil was three or four years the elder, for a little girl had died between him and James ; and if he were living at the present time, he would be drawing towards sixty years of age. It was not known whether he was living or not. Anthony Castlemaine had been a harsh and hasty man ; and Basil was wild and wilful. After a good deal of unpleasantness at home, and some bitter quarrelling between father and son, in which the two younger sons took part against their brother, Basil quitted his home and went abroad. He was twenty-two then, and had come into possession of a very fair sum of money, which fell to him from his late mother. The two other sons came into the same on attaining their majority. Besides this, Mr. Castlemaine handed over to Basil his portion, so that he went away rich. He went to seek his fortune and to get rid of his unnatural relatives, he informed his friends in Greylands and Stilborough, and that he hoped never to come back until Greylands' Rest was his. He never had come back. All those years, something like five-and-twenty now, and they had never heard from him directly, though once or twice incidentally ! The last time was about four years ago, when chance news came that he was alive and well.

James Castlemaine had remained with his father at Greylands' Rest, managing the land on the estate. Peter had taken his portion and set up as a banker at Stilborough : we have seen with what success. James married, and took his wife home to Greylands' Rest : but she died soon, leaving him a little son. Several years subsequently he married again : a widow lady ; and she was the present Mrs. Castlemaine.

Old Anthony Castlemaine lived on, year after year, at Greylands' Rest, wondering whether he should see his eldest son again. With all Basil's faults, he had been his father's favourite : and the old man grew to long for him. It was more than either of Basil's brothers did. Basil had had his portion from both father and mother, and so they washed their hands of him, as the two were wont to observe, and they did not want him back again. They, at least, had their wish, though Mr. Castlemaine had not. The old man lived to the age of eighty-five and then died without seeing his eldest son ; without, in fact, being sure that he was still alive. It was not so very long since old Anthony died : they had just put off mourning for him. James had come into Greylands' Rest on his father's death : at any rate, he had remained in possession. Rumours and surmises went abroad freely. Some thought it was left to James *in trust* for Basil ; but nobody knew, and the Castlemaines never talked of their own affairs. The estate of Greylands'

Rest was supposed to be worth about twelve hundred a-year. It was the only portion of old Mr. Castlemaine's property that there could be any doubt or surmise about : what money he had to dispose of, he had divided during his life-time between James and Peter ; Basil having had his share at starting. James Castlemaine was the only gentleman of importance living at Greylands ; he was looked up to as a sort of feudal lord by its inhabitants generally, and swayed them at will.

Following the coach-road that led off by the Dolphin for about half a mile, you came to a long green avenue on the right hand, which was the chief approach to Greylands' Rest. It was an old house, built of grey stone ; a straggling, in-and-out, spacious, comfortable mansion, only two stories high. Before the old-fashioned porch entrance, lay a fine green lawn, with seats under its trees, and beds of flowers. Stables, barns, kitchen gardens, and more lawns and flower beds lay around. The rooms inside were many, but rather small ; and most of them had to be approached by a narrow passage : as is sometimes the case in ancient houses that are substantially built. From the upper rooms at the *side* of the house, could be seen just opposite the Friar's Keep, its old casements and its broken upper walls. Commodore Teague's Hutt lying exactly in a line between the two buildings ; and beyond all might be caught glimpses of the glorious sea.

It was a cold, bright day in February, the day following the dinner at the banker's. Mr. Castlemaine was busy in his study—a business-room, where he kept his farming accounts, and wrote his letters—which was on the upper floor of the house, and looked towards the sea and the Friar's Keep. In a pretty room below, warm and comfortable, and called the red parlour from its prevailing colour, its ceiling low, its windows opening to the lawn, but closed to-day, sat the ladies of his family : Mrs. Castlemaine, her daughter Flora, and Ethel Reese.

It has been said that James Castlemaine's second wife was a widow, Mrs. Reese. Her first husband had also been a widower, Mr. Reese, who had one daughter, Ethel. Mrs. Reese never took well to this step-child ; she was jealous of Mr. Reese's affection for her ; and when, on Mr. Reese's death, which occurred shortly after the marriage, it was found that he had left considerably more money to his child than to his new wife, Mrs. Reese's dislike was complete. A year or two after her marriage with Mr. Castlemaine, a little girl was born to her—Flora. On this child she lavished all her love—but she had none for Ethel. Mr. Castlemaine, on his part, gave the greater portion of his affection to his son, the child of his first wife, Harry. A very fine young man now, of some five-and-twenty years, and his father was wrapt up in him. Ethel addressed Mr. and Mrs. Castlemaine as "papa" and "mamma," but she was in point of fact not related to either. She was five years old when she came to Greylands' Rest, had grown up there as a child of the house, and was called out of doors, Miss Castlemaine.

Ethel seemed to stand alone without kith or kin, with no one to love her ; and she felt it keenly. As much as a young lady can be put upon and snubbed, Ethel Reene was. Mr. Castlemaine was always kind to her, though perhaps somewhat indifferent ; Mrs. Castlemaine was unkind and tyrannical ; Flora—an indulged, selfish, ill-bred girl of twelve, forward enough for double her age—did her best to annoy her in all ways. And Mrs. Castlemaine permitted this : she could see no fault in Flora, she hated Ethel. Ethel Reene was nineteen now, growing fast into womanhood ; but she was young for her years, and of a charming simplicity—not so rare in girls then as it is now. She was good, gentle, and beautiful ; with a pale, quiet beauty that slowly takes hold of the heart, but as surely stays there. Her large grey eyes, full of depth and feeling, gazed out at you with almost the straightforward innocence of a child : and no child's heart could have been less free from guile. Her hair was dark, her features were refined and delicate, her whole appearance lady-like and most attractive.

Ethel Reene had much to put up with in her every-day life : for Mrs. Castlemaine's conduct was trying in the extreme ; Flora's worse than trying. She seldom retaliated : having learnt how useless retaliation from *her* was, against them : and besides she loved peace. But she was not without spirit : and only herself knew what it had cost her to learn to keep that spirit under. Sometimes when matters went very far, she would put her bonnet on and wander away to the cliffs ; where, seated on the extreme edge, she would remain for hours, looking out on the sea. She was fond of taking her place in the chapel ruins, and sitting there, for the expanse of ocean was most grand and beautiful ; sometimes, when the water was low, so that the strip of beach could be gained, she would step down the low but rather dangerous rock to it—which strip of beach was only accessible from the chapel ruins. But one day Mr. Castlemaine happened to see her do this ; he was very angry, and absolutely forbade her, not only to descend the rocks, but to enter, under any pretence whatsoever, the site of the chapel ruins. Ethel was not one to disobey.

But the higher rocks farther up, by the coast-guard station, were not denied her : Mr. Castlemaine only enjoining her to be cautious. It had grown to be her favourite spot, and she often sat or walked there. The ever-changing water seemed to bring consolation to her spirit ; it spoke to her in strange, soothing whispers ; it fed the romance and the dreams that lie in a young girl's heart. When the sea was rough and the waves dashed against the cliffs, flinging up their spray mountains high and sprinkling her face as with a mist, she would stand, lost in the grandeur and awe of the scene, her hat off and held by its ribbons, her hair floating in the wind. And so, for want of suitable companionship, Ethel Reene and the sea shared their secrets between them.

The glass doors of the red parlour were closed to-day against the

east wind. Mrs. Castlemaine sat by the fire, working at a pair of slippers; a little woman dressed in striped green silk, with light hair, and a cross look on what had once been a very pretty, though sharp-featured face. Ethel sat near the window, drawing; she wore a ruby dress of fine merino, with some white lace at its throat and sleeves; a blue ribbon, to which was suspended some small gold ornament encircled her delicate neck; drops of gold were in her ears; and her cheeks were flushed to crimson, for Mrs. Castlemaine was in hot dispute and making her feel very angry. Flora, a restless damsel, in a flounced brown frock and white pinafore, with a fair, saucy face and her flaxen curls tied back with blue, was perched on the music-stool before Ethel's piano, striking barbarous chords with one hand and abusing Ethel alternately.

The dispute to-day was this. Miss Oldham, Flora's governess, had lately given warning precipitately, and left Greylands' Rest, tired out, as everybody but Mrs. Castlemaine knew, with her pupil's insolence. Mrs. Castlemaine had not yet found any one willing, or whom she deemed eligible, to replace her—for it must be remembered that governesses then were somewhat rare. Weary of waiting, Mrs. Castlemaine had come to a sudden determination, and was now announcing it, that Ethel should have the honour of filling the post.

"It is of no use, mamma," said Ethel. "I could not teach; I am sure I am not fit for it. And, you know, Flora would never obey *me*."

"That I'd not," put in Miss Flora, twirling herself half round on the stool. "I hate governesses; and they do me no good. I don't know half as much as I did when Miss Oldham came, twelve months ago. Do I, mamma?"

"I fear you do not, my darling," replied Mrs. Castlemaine. "Miss Oldham's system of teaching was quite a failure, and she sadly neglected her duty; but——"

"Oh mamma," interrupted Flora, peevishly, "don't put in that horrid 'but.' I hate governesses. Nothing but learning lessons, lessons all day long, just as though you wanted *me* to be a governess!"

"If you did not learn, Flora, you would grow up a little heathen," Ethel ventured to remark. "You would not like that."

"Now don't you put in your word," retorted the girl, passionately. "It's not your place to interfere with me: is it, mamma?"

"Certainly not, my sweet child."

Miss Flora had changed her place. Quitting the music-stool for the hearth-rug, she took up the poker; and now stood brandishing it around, and looking daggers at Ethel. Ethel, her sweet face still flushed, went steadily on with her drawing.

"She's as ill-natured as she can be! Mamma, she'd like to see me toiling at geography and French grammar all day long. Nasty thing!"

"I can believe anything of Ethel that is ill-natured," equally spoke Mrs. Castlemaine, turning her slipper. "But I have made up my mind

that she shall teach you, Flo, my love, under—of course entirely—my superintendence. Miss Oldham used to resent interference."

"I do think, mamma, you must be joking!" cried Ethel, turning her flushed face and her beautiful grey eyes on her step-mother.

"When do I joke?" retorted Mrs. Castlemaine. "It will save the nuisance of a governess in the house: *and you shall teach Flora.*"

"I'll give her all the trouble I can," cried Miss Flora, bringing the poker within an inch of her mother's nose. "I'll learn just what I like, and let alone what I don't like. *She's* not going to be set up over me as Miss Oldham was. I'll kick you if you try it, Ethel."

"Stop, stop," spoke Ethel, firmness in her tone. "Mamma, pray understand me; I cannot attempt to do this. My life is not very pleasant now; it would be unbearable then. You know—you see—what Flora is: how can you ask me?"

Mrs. Castlemaine half rose in her angry spirit. It was something new for Ethel to set her mandates at defiance. Her voice rose to a scream; her small light eyes dilated.

"Do you beard me in my own house, Ethel Reene? I say that you *shall* do this. I am mistress here——"

Mistress she might be, but Mr. Castlemaine was master; and at that moment the door opened and he came in. Disputes were not very unusual in his home, but this seemed to be a frantic one.

"What is the meaning of this?" he inquired, taking in the scene with his keen dark eyes. His wife unseemly angry, her voice high; Ethel in tears—for they had come unbidden; Flora brandishing the poker towards Ethel, and dancing to its movements.

Mrs. Castlemaine sat down to resume her wool-work, her ruffled feathers subdued to smoothness. She never cared to give way to temper, or to injustice, in the presence of her husband; for she knew that it would still further weaken the little influence she retained over him.

"Were you speaking of a governess for Flora?" he asked, advancing and taking the paper from the young lady's hand. "What has Ethel to do with that?"

"I was observing that Ethel has a vast deal of leisure time, and that she might, rather than be idle, fill it up by teaching Flora," replied Mrs. Castlemaine, softly. "Especially as Ethel's French is so perfect. As a temporary thing, of course, if—if it did not answer."

"I do not find Ethel idle: she always seems to me to have some occupation on hand," observed Mr. Castlemaine. "As to her undertaking the teaching of Flora—would you like it, Ethel?"

"No, papa," was the brave answer, as she strove to hide her tears. "I have, I am sure, no talent for teaching: and Flora would never obey a word I said. It would make my life a burthen to me—I was saying so when you came in."

"Then, my dear child, the task shall certainly not be put upon you. We have no more right to force Ethel to do what is distasteful to her, than we should have to force it on ourselves," he added, turning to his wife. "You must see that, Sophia."

"But——" began Mrs. Castlemaine.

"No buts, as to this," he interrupted. "You are well able to pay a governess—and, as Ethel justly observes, she would not be able to do anything with Flora. Miss Oldham could not do it. My opinion is, no governess ever will do it, so long as you spoil the child."

"I don't spoil her, James."

The Master of Greylands lifted his dark eyebrows: the assertion was too palpably untrue, to be worthy a refutation. "The better plan to adopt with Flora would be to send her to school——"

"That I will never do," interrupted Mrs. Castlemaine.

"Then look out for a successor to Miss Oldham, Sophia. And, my strong advice to you is—let the governess, when she comes, hold entire control over Flora, and punish her when she deserves it. I shall not care to see her grow up the unlovable child she seems to be now."

Mrs. Castlemaine folded up her slipper quietly, and left the room boiling over with rage, in spite of her apparent calmness. Flora, who stood in fear of her father, flew off to the kitchen, to demand bread and jam and worry the servants. Ethel was going on with her drawing; and Mr. Castlemaine, who had a taste for sketching himself, went and looked over her.

"What are you doing, Ethel?" he said. "The Friar's Keep! Why, what a curious coincidence! Mary Ursula was filling in just the same thing last night."

"Was she, papa! It makes a nice sketch."

"You don't draw as well as Mary Ursula does, Ethel."

"I do nothing as well as she, papa. I don't think anybody does."

"What are those figures in the fore-ground?"

"I meant them for two of the Grey Sisters. Their cloaks are not finished yet."

"Oh," said Mr. Castlemaine, rather shortly. "And that's a group of fishermen, I see: much the more sensible people of the two."

"What did Mary Ursula say last night, papa?"

"Say? Nothing particular. She sent her love to Ethel."

"Did she dine at table?"

"No, child. Miss Mountsorrel spent the evening with her."

"And papa," whispered Ethel, "is it fixed yet?"

"Is what fixed yet?"

"The wedding-day."

"I don't think so—or you would have heard of it. I expect they will ask you to be her bridesmaid."

CHAPTER III.

AT THE DOLPHIN INN.

THE Dolphin Inn, as already said, stood in the angle between the village street and the high road that branched off to the open country. It faced the *road*, standing, like most of the dwellings in Greylands, somewhat back from it. A substantial, low-roofed house, painted yellow, with a flaming sign-board in front, bearing a dolphin bright with various hues and colours, and with two low bow-windows on either side the door. A yard lay to the side with out-houses and stables, and there was some good land behind. Along the wall, underneath the parlour windows and on either side the entrance door, ran a bench on which wayfarers might sit; at right angles with it, near the yard, was a pump with a horse-trough beside it. Upon a pinch, the inn could supply a pair of post-horses: but they were seldom called for, as Stillborough was so near. It was the only inn of any kind at Greylands, and was frequented by the fishermen, as well as occasionally by more important guests. The landlord was John Bent. The place was his own and had been his father's before him. He was considered to be a "warm" man; to be able to live at his ease, irrespective of custom. John Bent was independent in manner and speech, except to his wife. Mrs. Bent, a thrifty, bustling, talkative woman, had taken John's independence out of him at first setting off, so far as she was concerned: but they got on very well together. To Mr. Castlemaine especially, John was given to show independence. They were civil to each other, but there was no love lost between them. Mr. Castlemaine would have liked to purchase the Dolphin and the land appertaining to it: he had made more than one strong overture to do so, which John Bent had resisted and resented. The landlord, too, had taken up an idea that Mr. Castlemaine did not encourage the sojourn of strangers at the inn; had done his best in a quiet way to discourage it, as was observed in regard to the Grey Ladies. Altogether, John Bent did not favour the Master of Greylands.

On one of the days of this self-same month of February, when the air was keen and frosty and the sea sparkled under the afternoon sunshine, John Bent and his wife sat in the room they mostly occupied, the best kitchen. The room was on the side of the house, its large, low, three-framed window and its outer door facing the beach. Underneath the window outside was another of those hospitable benches, for customers to sit down on to drink their ale when it pleased them. Mrs. Bent herself liked to sit there when work was over, and criticise the doings of the village. Whatever might be the weather, this door, like the front one, stood open; and well-known guests, or neighbours step-

ping in for a gossip, would enter by it. But no customer attempted to call for pipe or drink in the room, unless specially permitted.

Mrs. Bent stood at the table before the window, picking shrimps for potting. She was slim and active, with dark curls on either side her thin but not uncomely face. Her cap had cherry ribbons in it, her favourite colour, and flying strings; her cotton gown, of a chintz pattern, was drawn through its pocket hole, displaying a dark stuff petticoat, and neat shoes and stockings. John Bent sat at the blazing fire, as near to it as he could get his wooden chair in, reading the "*Stilborough Herald*."

"It's uncommon cold to-day!" he broke out presently, giving a twist to his back. "The wind comes in and cuts one like a knife. Don't you think, Dorothy, we might shut that door these sharp days?"

"No, I don't," said Mrs. Bent.

"You'll get rheumatism yet before the winter's over, as sure as you're a living woman. Or I shall."

"Shall I!" retorted Mrs. Bent, in her sharply decisive tones. "Over forty years of age I am now, and I've been here nigh upon twenty, and never had a touch yet. I'm not going to begin to shut up doors and windows, John Bent, to please you or anybody else."

Thus put down, John resigned himself to his paper again. He was a spare, middle-sized man, some years older than his wife, with a red face, and scanty grey hair. Presently he laid the newspaper aside, and sat watching his wife's nimble fingers.

"Dorothy, woman, when those shrimps are done, you might send a pot of 'em over to poor Sister Mildred. She's uncommon weak, they say."

The very idea that had been running through Mrs. Bent's own mind. But she did not receive the suggestion courteously.

"Suppose you mind your own concerns, John. If I am to supply the parish with shrimps gratis, it's about time I left off potting."

John picked up his paper again with composure: he was accustomed to all this: and just then a shadow fell across it. A fisherman was standing at the open door with some fish for sale.

"It's you, Tim, is it," cried Mrs. Bent in her shrillest tones. "It's not often *your* lazy limbs bring me anything worth buying. What is it to-day?"

"A cod, Mrs. Bent," replied the man. "Never was finer caught."

"And a fine price, I dare be bound!" returned the landlady, stepping aside to inspect the fish. "What's the price?"

Tim named it: putting on a little to allow of what he knew would ensue—the beating-down. Mrs. Bent spoke loudly in her wrath.

"Now look here, Tim Gleeson!—do you think I'm made of money; or do you think I'm soft? I'll give you just half the sum. If you don't like it you may take yourself off, and your fish behind you."

Mrs. Bent got the cod at her price. She had returned to her shrimps; when, after a gentle tap at the open door, there entered one of the

Grey Sisters. Sister Ann—whose week it was to help in the domestic work and to go on errands—was a short, fair, cheerful little body, as fond of talking as Mrs. Bent herself. She was dressed entirely in grey. A grey stuff gown of a convenient length for walking, that is, just touching the ankles, a grey cloth cloak reaching down nearly as far; and a round grey straw bonnet with a white net border close to the face. When the ladies took possession of the Grey Nunnery, and constituted themselves a Sisterhood, they had assumed this attire. It was neat, suitable, and becoming; and not of a nature to attract particular attention when only one or two of them were seen abroad together. From the dress, however, had arisen the appellation applied to them—the Grey Ladies. In summer weather the stuff used was of a lighter texture. The stockings worn by Sister Ann were grey, the shoes stout, and fastened with a steel buckle. The only difference made by the superior sisters was, that the material of their gowns and cloaks was finer and softer.

“Lack-a-day! these shrimps will never get done!” cried Mrs. Bent, under her breath. “How d’y’e do, Sister Ann?” she said aloud, her tones less sharp, out of respect to the Order. “You look as blue as bad news. I hope there’s no fresh sickness, or accident.”

“It’s the east wind,” replied Sister Ann. “Coming round that beach corner, it seizes hold of one. I’ve such a pain here with it,” touching her chest, “that I can hardly draw my breath.”

“Cramps,” said Mrs. Bent, shortly. “John,” she added, turning sharply on her husband, “you’d better get Sister Ann a spoonful or two of the cordial, instead of sitting to roast your face at that fire till it’s the colour of red pepper.”

“Not for worlds,” interposed Sister Ann, really meaning it. But John, at the hospitable suggestion, had moved away.

“I have come over to ask if you’ll be good enough to let me have a small pot of currant jelly, Mrs. Bent,” continued the Grey Sister. “It is for Sister Mildred, poor thing——”

“Is she no better?” interrupted Mrs. Bent.

“Not a bit. And her lips are so parched, poor lady, and her deafness is so worrying——”

“Oh, as to her deafness, *that’ll* never be better,” cried Mrs. Bent. “Worse, as she grows older.”

“It can’t be much worse than it is,” returned Sister Ann, who seemed slightly to resent the fact of the deafness. “We have had a good bit of sickness in the village, and our black jelly is all gone: not that we made much, being so poor. If you will let me buy a pot from you, Mrs. Bent, we shall be glad.”

For answer, Mrs. Bent left her shrimps, unlocked a corner cupboard, and put two small pots of jelly into the Sister’s hand.

“I am not sure that I can afford both to-day,” said Sister Ann, dubiously. “How much are they?”

"Nothing," returned Mrs. Bent. "Not one farthing will I take from the ladies : I'm always glad to do the little I can for any of you. Give them to Sister Mildred with my respects ; and say, please, that when I've done my shrimps I'll bring her over a pot of them. I was intending to do it before you came in."

The landlord returned with something in a wine-glass, and stopped Sister Ann's thanks by making her drink it. Putting the jelly into her basket, she gratefully departed.

"It's well the Master of Greylands' Rest didn't hear you promise the shrimps and give them pots of jelly, wife," cried John Bent, with a queer kind of laugh. "He'd not have liked it."

"The master of Greylands' Rest may lump it."

"It's my belief he'd like to drive the Grey Sisters away from the place, instead of having 'em helped with pots of jelly."

"What I choose to do, I *do* do, thank goodness, without need to ask leave of anybody," returned independent Mrs. Bent.

"I can't think what it is puts Mr. Castlemaine against 'em," debated John Bent. "Unless he fancies that if they were less busy over religion, and that, we might get the parson here more as a regular thing."

"We should be none the better for him," snapped Mrs. Bent. "For my part, I don't see much good in parsons," she candidly added. "They only get into people's way."

The silence that ensued was broken by a sound of horses in the distance, followed by the blowing of a horn. John Bent and his wife looked simultaneously at the eight-day clock, ticking in its mahogany case by the fire, and saw that it was on the stroke of four : the time the London coach came by. John passed through the house to the front door ; his wife after glancing at herself in the hanging-glass and giving a twitch to her cap and her cherry ribbons, followed him.

It was not that they expected the coach to bring visitors to them. Passengers from London and elsewhere were generally bound to Stilton-borough. But they as regularly went to the door to be in readiness, in case any did alight ; to see it pass, and to exchange salutations with the coachman and guard. It was an event in the Dolphin's somewhat monotonous day's life.

"I do believe, wife, it's going to stop !" cried John.

It was doing so already. The four horses were drawing up ; the guard was descending from his seat behind. He opened the door to let out a gentleman, and took a portmanteau from the boot. Before John Bent, naturally slow of movement, had well bestirred himself, the gentleman had caught up his portmanteau.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said John, taking it from him. "You are welcome, sir : will you be pleased to enter."

The stranger was on the point of stepping in, when he halted and looked up at the sign-board : at the dolphin depicted there in all the hues of the rainbow, its tail lashing up spouts of water. Smiling to

himself, almost as though the dolphin were an old acquaintance, he went in. Mrs. Bent curtseyed low to him in the good old respectful fashion : and he returned it with a bow.

A fire was blazing in one of the parlours, and to this room the guest was conducted by both landlord and landlady. Taking off his upper coat, which was warmly slashed with dark fur, they saw a slight active man of some eight-and-twenty years, under the middle height, with a fresh, pleasant, handsome face, and bright dark eyes. Something in the face seemed to strike on a chord of the landlord's memory.

"Who the dickens is he like?" mentally questioned John. "Anyway, I like his looks."

"I can have a bed-chamber, I suppose?" spoke the stranger : and they noticed then that his English, though quite fluent as to words, had something of a foreign ring in it. "Will you show me to one."

"At your service, sir ; please step this way," said Mrs. Bent, in her most gracious tones, for she was habitually courteous to her guests, and was besides favourably impressed by this one's looks and manners. "Hot water directly, Molly," she called out in the direction of the kitchen, "and John, do you bring up the gentleman's luggage."

"I can't think who it is his face puts me in mind of," began John, when he and his wife got back to the best kitchen again, and she began to make hasty work of the shrimps.

"Rubbish to his face," spoke Mrs. Bent. "The face is nice enough if you mean that. It's late to get anything of a dinner up ; and he has not said what he'll have, though I asked him."

"And look here, wife—that portmanteau is not an English one."

"It may be Dutch, for all it matters to us. Now John Bent, just you stir up that fire a bit, and put some coal on. I may have to bring a saucepan in here, for what I know."

"Tush !" said John—doing as he was bid, nevertheless. "A chop and a potato : that's as much as most of these chance travellers want."

"Not when they are from over the water. I don't forget the last foreign Frenchman that put up here. Fifteen dishes he wanted for his dinner, if he wanted one. And all of 'em dabs and messes."

She had gone to carry away her shrimps when the stranger came down. He walked direct into the kitchen, and looked from the open door. The landlord stood in waiting.

"You are Thomas Bent, I think," said the stranger, turning round.

"John Bent, sir. My father was Thomas Bent, and he has been dead many a year."

"And this is your good wife?" he added, as the landlady came bustling in. "Mistress of the inn."

"And master too," muttered John, in an undertone.

"I was about to order dinner, Mr. Bent——"

"Then you'd better order it of me, sir," put in the landlady. "His

head's no better than a sieve if it has much to carry. Ask for spinach and cauliflower, and you'd get served up carrots and turnips."

"Then I cannot do better than leave it to you," said the young man, with a pleasant laugh. "I should like some fish out of that glorious sea. Can I have an English plum-pudding?"

"An English plum-pudding! Good gracious, sir, it could not be made and boiled."

"That will do for to-morrow, then."

Mrs. Bent departed, calling to Molly as she went. The inn kept but two servants; Molly, and a man; the latter chiefly attending to out-of-door things: horses, pigs, and such like. When further help was needed, it could be had from the village.

"This must be a healthy spot," remarked the stranger, taking a chair without ceremony at John Bent's fire. "It is very open."

"Uncommon healthy, sir. A bit bleak in winter, when the wind's in the east: as it is to-day."

"Have you many good families residing about here?"

"Only one, sir. The Castlemaines."

"The Castlemaines?"

"An old family who have lived here for many a year. You'd pass their place, sir, not long before getting out here: a house of grey-stone, on your left hand. It is called Greylands' Rest."

"I have heard of Greylands' Rest—and also of the Castlemaines. It belonged, I think, to old Anthony Castlemaine."

"It did, sir. His son has it now."

"I fancied he had more than one son."

"He had three, sir. The eldest, Mr. Basil, went abroad and never was heard of after: leastways, nothing direct from him. The second Mr. James, has Greylands' Rest. He always lived there with his father and when the old gentleman died, it came to him."

"By will?"

"Ah, sir, that's what no soul can tell. All sorts of surmises went about; but nobody knows how it was."

A pause. "And the third son? Where is he?"

"The third's Mr. Peter. He is a banker at Stilborough."

"Is he rich?"

John Bent laughed at the question. "Rich, sir? Why it's said he could a'most buy up the world. He has one daughter; a beautiful young lady, who's going to be married to Mr. Blake-Gordon son of Sir Richard. Many thought that Mr. Castlemaine—the present master of Greylands' Rest—would have liked to get her for his son. But——"

In burst Mrs. Bent, a big cooking apron tied on over her gown. She looked slightly surprised at seeing the stranger seated there; but said nothing. Unlocking the corner cupboard, and throwing wide its doors, she began searching for something on the shelves.

"Here you are, Mrs. Bent! Busy as usual."

The sudden salutation came from a gentleman who had entered the house hastily. A tall, well-made, handsome young fellow, with a ready tongue, and a frank expression in his dark brown eyes. He stood just inside the door, and did not observe the stranger.

"Is it you, Mr. Harry?" said the landlady, glancing round.

"It's nobody else," he answered. "What an array of jam pots! Do you leave the key in the door? A few of those might be walked off and never be missed."

"I should like to see anybody attempt it," cried Mrs. Bent wrathfully. "You are always joking, Mr. Harry."

He laughed cordially. "John," he said, turning to the landlord, "did the coach bring a parcel for me?"

"No, sir. Were you expecting one?"

Mrs. Bent turned completely round from her cupboard. "It's not a trick you are thinking to play us, is it, sir? I have not forgotten that other parcel you had left here once."

"Other parcel? Oh, that was ever so many years ago. I am expecting this from London, John, if you will take it in. It will come to-morrow, I suppose. Mrs. Bent thinks I'm a boy still."

"Ah no, sir, that I don't. You've long grown beyond that, and out of my control."

"Out of everybody else's too," he laughed. "Where I used to get cuffs I now get kisses, Mrs. Bent. And I am not sure but they are the more dangerous application of the two."

"I am very sure they are," called out Mrs. Bent, as the young man went off laughing, after bowing slightly to the stranger, who was standing up, and whose appearance bespoke him to be a gentleman.

"Who was that?" asked the stranger of John Bent.

"That was Mr. Harry Castlemaine, sir. Son of the Master of Greylands."

With one leap, the stranger was outside the door, gazing after him. But Harry Castlemaine, quick and active, was already nearly out of sight. When the stranger came back to his place again, Mrs. Bent had locked up her cupboard, and was gone.

"A fine-looking young man," he remarked.

"And a good-hearted one as ever lived—though he is a bit random," said John. "I like Mr. Harry: I don't like his father."

"Why not?"

"Well, sir, I hardly know why. One is apt to take dislikes sometimes."

"You were speaking of Greylands' Rest—of the rumours that went abroad respecting it when old Mr. Castlemaine died. What were they?"

"Various, sir; but all tending to one and the same point. And that was, whether Greylands' Rest had, or had not, legally come to Mr. James Castlemaine."

"Being the second son," quietly spoke the stranger. "There can be

no question, I should think, that the rightful heir was the eldest son, Basil.'

"And it was known, too, that Basil was his father's favourite; and that the old man during his last years was always looking and longing for him to come back," spoke John Bent, warming with the subject. "On the other hand, sir, James was close at hand, and the old man could leave it to him if he pleased."

"One glance at the will would set all doubt at rest."

"Ay. But it was not known, sir, whether there was a will."

"Not known?"

"No, sir. Some said the will left all to Mr. James; others said there was no will at all, but that old Anthony Castlemaine made him a deed of gift of Greylands' Rest. And a great many said, and still say, that old Mr. Castlemaine only gave him over the estate *in trust* for Mr. Basil—or for any sons Mr. Basil might leave after him."

The stranger sat in silence. On his little finger shone a diamond ring, evidently of value; he twirled it about unconsciously.

"What is *your* opinion, Mr. Bent?" he suddenly asked.

"Mine, sir? Well, I can't help thinking that the whole was left in trust for Mr. Basil, and that if he's alive the place is no more Mr. James's than it is mine. I think it particularly for this reason—that if it was given to Mr. James, whether by will or by deed of gift, he would have taken care to show abroad the will, or the deed, that gave it him, and so set the rumours at rest for good. So that——"

"Now then, John Bent! It's about time you began to lay the cloth and see to the silver."

No need to say from whom the interruption came. Mrs. Bent, her face flushed to the colour of the cherry ribbons, whisked in and whisked out again. John followed; and set about his cloth-laying. The stranger sat where he was, in a reverie, until called to dinner.

John Bent waited on his guest, who dined to his complete satisfaction. He was about to leave the wine on the table after dinner, but the guest motioned it away.

"No, no more; I do not drink after dinner. It is not our custom in France."

"Oh, very well, sir. I'll cork it up for to-morrow. I—I beg your pardon," resumed the landlord, as he drew the cloth from the table, "what name shall I put down to you, sir?"

The stranger rose and stood on the hearth-rug, speaking distinctly when he gave his name. Nevertheless John Bent seemed not to hear it, for he stared like one in a dream.

"What?" he gasped, in a startled tone of terror, as he staggered back against the side-board. "What name did you say, sir?"

"Anthony Castlemaine."

(*To be continued.*)

THE SAILORS.

“ They that go down to the sea in ships : and occupy their business in great waters ; these men see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep.”

THERE is an old common saying that one half of the world does not know how the other half lives. Nothing can be more true. True it is also that the first half does not care. And this indifference arises not from want of kindly interest, but from want of thought. When distress, and hardship, toil and struggle are brought palpably before us, our best sympathies are aroused ; but so long as they are out of sight, they are out of mind.

Of all the classes who have to earn a living by the sweat of the brow, none deserve our sympathies as do the sailors of our merchant-navy ; of all known callings theirs is the least easy and the most hazardous. When a sailor puts his foot on board his ship, there is only a plank between him and Eternity. He sails away upon his voyage in daily peril : peril not the less existing because unthought of. When the skies are fair the sailors think not of storms ; but the storms come, often without warning. They are carried up to the heaven and down again to the deep ; their soul melteth away because of the trouble ; and they cry unto the Lord to still the waves and to bring them to the haven where they would be !

But ah ! how often does it come to pass that the waves are not stilled ; that the sought for haven is not reached ! How many a fair ship has gone down in the treacherous waters ! how many a one has been flung on the rocks to her doom !—how many another has sailed gaily away on her voyage, and never again been heard of or seen !

Yes the peril of a sailor is great. But his hardships are greater. Hard work, hard fare, hard treatment : the latter sometimes so inhuman and terrible that if we—living far away in our unconscious ease—could witness it, we should cry aloud to God to take heed and pity. Burning under the fierce heat of the tropics, freezing in the bitter climate round the Horn, the sailor must alike endure, and work. For days together his wet clothes may not be off his back, he and his biscuit are alike drenched with sea-water ; neither meals nor sleep can be taken, except by snatches : the ship is in peril and he must toil on to save her. The hard ropes bruise his hands as he tries to work the sails ; he can hardly hold on aloft ; the fierce wind buffets him, the hail cuts his face : now and again he may perhaps dream of comfort, but

he gets none of it. He must submit to the tyranny of a harsh captain, to the cruelty of the chief mate, his master : and how tyrannical some captains can be, and how cruel some mates are, the world gets an inkling of from time to time.

When news reaches us of the loss of some magnificent ship with all on board, we bewail the fate of the officers. The newspapers sound their praises, men and women talk to each other in a strain of lamentation and pity for them and their families. And justly so. But who thinks of the poor sailors ? Few of us, I fear, as a rule. And yet, how hard their lives had been, compared with those in command. They had to encounter the same sudden death ; their souls, perhaps quite unprepared, had equally been summoned to meet their Maker.

We ought to help a sailor because he is so very helpless ; we ought to compassionate him because his life is so hard and is worn out so early ; we ought to be considerate to him from the never-ceasing peril in which his days are passed. At many seasons of the year—and this is one—we cannot take up a newspaper, but it contains accounts of wrecks at sea.

When a wreck occurs, nobody hears anything about the poor sailors rescued from it. What becomes of them ? They must have lost all their clothes and possessions ; and it sometimes happens that they are injured as well. Who is to take care of them until they can turn themselves round and ship again ?—who will supply them with clothes ? Of all helpless men, I must repeat it, a sailor is the most helpless. His home is at sea ; he has none on land. When he comes home from a long voyage where has he to go ? Generally nowhere. No kind and anxious friends are looking out for him ; no homestead is open to receive him. He is not perfection : it is of no use to attempt to gloss over that obvious fact ; he is foolish and impulsive and reckless. But look at the temptations that beset him !—some of us, wise and educated people that we are, might not always walk off the other way.

As soon as the vessel comes up to dock, and the sailor steps ashore, he finds himself amid some company who have gone down to meet him. The man who keeps the wretched boarding house, and has in it a flaring tap-room : he is there. The woman with the rolling eyes and the painted cheeks, and the false words on her wicked lips : she is there. These, and others of their class, stretch out their hands of welcome to him. Of course he can't resist, for the sailor is, of all men, the most simple, and away he goes with them. Where else has he to go ? Seated at the fire in the tap-room with a glass of hot grog in his hand, and perhaps a fiddle playing, he contrasts this warmth and ease and jollity with the hardships he has just been enduring at sea, and thinks he has tumbled into Paradise. A few days of the Paradise, and the man is turned into the street ; his money has come to an end. He

does not understand quite how : whether his hospitable friends have robbed him of it, or whether it has melted : but, gone it is : and all he can do now is to ship himself off again.

Such is the sailor's life. Does it excite no pity ? Ought it not to appeal to every instinct of our better nature ? What becomes of these poor men when they are beyond work ?—and they are often beyond it by the time they are middle-aged. When the chief officer of an outward-bound ship goes down to the docks to engage a crew, he will not look at an old man. "Pass on," says he : "you won't do." The man passes on : and more than one poor fellow, disheartened by these rebuffs, weakened by poverty, neglected and forlorn, has laid himself down to die.

In the *Times* of December the 5th, there was an appeal from Captain Henry Shuttleworth on behalf of these poor neglected merchant-sailors. His letter is too long to transcribe in full, but the following are extracts from it.

"Where, then, is the provision for our merchant-sailor when old, disabled, and unfitted for work, worn-out and enfeebled from the effects of his hazardous calling ?

"America, France, the little kingdom of Holland, Italy, Sweden, all the maritime Powers, have a national provision for their merchant seamen ; but, strange anomaly, England, the greatest maritime Power in the world, has none ! It has been left to private individuals, aided by the benevolence of the public, to establish a Home for worn-out sailors, and, under the patronage of our sailor Prince, the Royal Alfred Aged Merchant Seamen's Institution has become an accomplished fact. I can speak with authority as to the working of this truly national charity, which for rigid economy and care for the welfare of the poor old sailor cannot be excelled. The Institution is supported entirely by voluntary contributions ; it professes to provide a home for single men and widowers ; while married men, and those who have a little assistance from their friends, receive an out-pension of £12 a year.

"Many a poor tar, prematurely old from exposure and shipwreck, is applying for admission to the Royal Alfred Institution. We are anxious to elect as many as possible, for otherwise they will be left to succumb to the rigours of this severe winter or end their days in a workhouse.

"The Institution is £1,200 in debt to tradesmen for the bare necessities of life. One hundred inmates are housed, clothed, and fed, and ninety receive monthly £1 each as an out-pension. This charitable work is carried on unostentatiously. We have no sensational or thrilling tale to tell of hairbreadth escapes and deeds of daring done, for the days of such, with them, have passed."

It surely seems that this is an appeal that the public may safely respond to. Some, it may be, to whom God has given means and a generous heart, will remember, as they sit with their children in their own sheltered homes, the sailors who once bore the toils, the cold, the hardships of the sea, and who now, able to toil no more, are homeless and destitute.

Captain Shuttleworth's address is 14, Dawson Place, Bayswater. Messrs. Coutts and Co., Strand ; Williams, Deacon and Co., Birchin Lane ; Fuller, Banbury and Co., Lombard Street ; Captain Tribe, Secretary, at the office, 2, Cowper's Court, Cornhill, will also be glad to receive subscriptions.

TWO SONNETS.

I.

VENUS'S LOOKING-GLASS.

I MARKED where lovely Venus and her court
 With song and dance and merry laugh went by ;
 Weightless, their wingless feet seemed made to fly,
 Bound from the ground and in mid air to sport.
 Left far behind I heard the dolphins snort
 Tracking their goddess with a wistful eye,
 Around whose head white doves rose, wheeling high
 Or low, and cooed after their tender sort.
 All this I saw in Spring. Thro' Summer heat
 I saw the lovely Queen of Love no more.
 But when flushed Autumn thro' the woodlands went
 I spied sweet Venus walk amid the wheat :
 Whom seeing, every harvester gave o'er
 His toil, and laughed and hoped and was content.

II.

LOVE LIES BLEEDING.

LOVE that is dead and buried, yesterday
 Out of his grave rose up before my face ;
 No recognition in his look, no trace
 Of memory in his eyes dust-dimmed and grey.
 While I, remembering, found no word to say,
 But felt my quickened heart leap in its place ;
 Caught afterglow, thrown back from long-set days,
 Caught echoes of all music passed away.
 Was this indeed to meet ?—I mind me yet
 In youth we met when hope and love were quick,
 We parted with hope dead, but love alive :
 I mind me how we parted then heart-sick,
 Remembering, loving, hopeless, weak to strive :—
 Was this to meet ? Not so, we have not met.

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

OUR FIRST TERM AT OXFORD.

IT was Friday night at the Oxford terminus, and all the world scrambling for cabs. I don't think I ever saw such a scene. Knocked here, pushed there, thrust yonder! Sir John and the Squire, nearly lifted off their legs, and too much taken aback to fight for themselves, stood against the wall, thinking the community had gone suddenly mad. Bill Whitney and Tod, tall, strong young fellows, able to hold their own anywhere, secured a cab at length, and we and our luggage got in and on it.

"To the 'Mitre.'"

"If this is a specimen of Oxford manners, the sooner the lads are at home the better," growled the Squire. Sir John Whitney was settling his spectacles on his nose—nearly lost off it in the scuffle.

"Snepp told me it was a regular shindy at the terminus the first day of term, with all the students coming back," said Bill Whitney.

There had been no end of discussion as to our college career. Sir John Whitney said William must go to Oxford, as he had been at Oxford himself; whereas Brandon stood out against Oxford for me; would not hear of it. He preferred Cambridge he said: and to Cambridge Johnny Ludlow should go: and he, as my guardian, had full power over me. The Squire cared not which university was chosen; but Tod went in for Oxford with all his strong will: he said the boating was best there. The result was that Mr. Brandon gave way, and we were entered at Christchurch.

Mr. Brandon had me at his house for two days beforehand, giving me counsel. He had one of his bad colds just then and kept his room, and his voice was never more squeaky. The last evening, I sat up there with him while he sipped his broth. The fire was large enough to roast us, and he had three flannel nightcaps on. It was that night that he talked to me most. He believed with all his heart, he said, that the temptations to young men were greater at Oxford than at Cambridge; that, of the two, the more reckless set of men were there: and that was one of the reasons why he had objected to Oxford for me. And then he proceeded to put the temptations pretty strongly before me, and did not mince things, warning me that it would require all the mental and moral strength I possessed to resist them, and steer clear of a course of sin and shame. He then suddenly opened the Bible, which was on the table at his elbow, and read out a line or two from the thirtieth chapter of Deuteronomy.

"See, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil : therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

"That's what I have been striving to set before you, Johnny Ludlow. Read that chapter, the whole of it, often ; treasure its precepts in your heart ; and may God give you grace to keep them !"

He shook hands with me in silence. I took up my candle and waited a moment, for I thought he was going to speak again.

"Will you try to keep them, lad ?"

"I will try, sir."

We were fortunate in getting good rooms at Christchurch. Tod's and mine were close together ; Bill Whitney's on the floor above. Our sitting-room was pleasant ; it had an old cracked piano in it, which turned out to be passably fair when it had been tinkered and tuned. The windows looked out on the trees of the Broad Walk and to the meadows beyond : but trees are bare in winter, and the month was January. I had never stayed at Oxford before : and I saw that I should like it, with its fine, grand old colleges. The day after we got there, Saturday, we wrote our names in the Dean's book, and saw our tutor. The rest of the day was spent in seeing about battels and getting into the new ways. Very new to us. A civil young fellow, who waited on us as scout, was useful ; they called him "Charley" in the college. Tod pulled a long face at some of the rules, and did not like the prospect of unlimited work.

"I'll go in for the boating and fishing and driving, Johnny ; and you can go in for the books."

"All right, Tod." I knew what he meant. It was not that he did not intend to take a fair amount of work : but to exist without a good share of out-of-door life also, would have been hard lines for Tod.

The Sunday services were beautiful. The first Sunday of term was a high day, and the cathedral was filled. Orders of admission to the public were not necessary that day, and a general congregation mixed with the students. Sir John and the Squire were staying at the Mitre till Monday. After service we went to promenade in the Broad Walk—and it seemed that everybody else went.

"Look there !" cried the Squire, "at this tall clergyman coming along. I am sure he is one of the canons of Worcester."

It was Mr. Fortescue—Honourable and Reverend. He halted for a minute to exchange greetings with Sir John Whitney, whom he knew, and then passed on his way.

"There's some pretty girls about, too," resumed the Squire, gazing around. "Not that I'd advise you boys to look much at them. Wonder if they often walk here ?"

Before a week had gone by, we were quite at home ; had shaken down into our new life as passengers shake down in their places in an omnibus ; and made lots of friends. Some I liked ; some I did not.

There was one fellow always coming in—a tall dark man with crisp hair ; his name Richardson. He had plenty of money and kept dogs and horses, and seemed to go in for every kind of fast life the place afforded. Of work he did none ; and report ran that he was being watched by the proctor, with whom he was generally in hot water. Altogether he was not in good odour : and he had a way of mocking at religion as though he were an atheist.

"I heard a bit about Richardson just now," cried Whitney, one morning that he had brought his commons in to breakfast with us—and the fields outside were white with snow. "Mayhew says he's a scamp."

"Don't think he's much else, myself," said Tod. "I say, just taste this butter ! It's shockingly strong. Wonder what it is made of ?"

"Mayhew says he's a liar as well as a villain. There's no speaking after him. Last term a miserable affair occurred in the town ; the authorities could not trace it home to Richardson though they suspected he was the black sheep. Lots of fellows knew he was : but he denied it out-and-out. I think we had better not have much to do with him."

"He entertains jolly well," said Tod. "Johnny, you've boiled these eggs too hard. And his funds seem to spring from some perpetual gold mine——"

The door opened, and two bull-dogs burst in, leaping and howling. Richardson—they were his—followed, with little Ford ; the latter a quiet, inoffensive man, who stuck to his work.

"Be quiet, you two devils !" cried Richardson, kicking his dogs. "Lie down, will you ? I say, I've got a wine-coach on to-night in my rooms, after Hall. Shall be glad to see you all at it."

Considering the conversation he had broken in upon, none of us had a very ready answer at hand.

"I have heaps of letters to answer to-night, and must do it," said Whitney. "Thank you all the same."

Richardson might have read coolness in the tone ; I don't know ; but he turned the back of his chair on Bill to face Tod.

"You have not letters to write, I suppose, Todhetley."

"Not I. I leave letters to Ludlow."

"You'll come then."

"Can't," said Tod candidly. "Don't mean to go in for wine parties."

"Oh," said Richardson. "You'll tell another tale when you've been here a bit longer. Will you be still, you brutes ?"

"Hope I shan't," said Tod. "Wine plays the very mischief with work. Should never get any done if I went in for it."

"Do you intend to go up for honours ?" went on Richardson.

"'Twould be a signal failure if I did. I leave all that to Ludlow—as I said by the letters. See to the dogs, Richardson."

The animals had struck up a fight. Richardson secured the one,

and sent the other out with a kick. Our scout was coming in, and the dog flew at him. No damage ; but a great row.

"Charley," cried Tod, "this butter's not fit to eat."

"Is it not, sir. What's the matter with it?"

"The matter with it?—everything's the matter it."

"Is *that* your scout?" asked Richardson, when the man had gone again, holding his dog between his knees as he sat.

"Yes," said Tod. "And your dogs all but made mincemeat of him. You should teach them better manners."

"Serve him right if they had. His name's Tasson."

"Tasson, is it? We call him Charley here."

"I know. He's a queer one."

"How is he queer?"

"He's pious."

"He's what?"

"Pious," repeated Richardson, twisting his mouth. "A saint ; cant ; a sneak."

"Good gracious !" cried Bill Whitney.

"You think I'm jesting ! Ask Ford here. Tell it, Ford."

"Oh, it's true," said Ford : "true that he goes in for piety. Last term there was a freshman here named Carstairs. He was young ; rather soft ; no experience, you know, and he began to go the pace. One night this Charley, his scout, fell on his knees, and besought him with tears not to go to the bad ; to pull up in time and remember what the end must be ; and—and so on."

"What did Carstairs do?"

"Do ! why turned him out," put in Richardson. Carstairs, by the way, has taken his name off the books, or *had* to take it off.

"Charley is civil and obliging to us," said Whitney. "Never presumes."

How much of the tale was gospel we knew not ; but for my own part, I liked Charley. There was something about him quite different from scouts and servants in general—and by the way, I don't think Charley was a scout, only a scout's help—but in appearance and diction and manner he was really superior. A slim, slight young fellow of twenty, with straight fine light hair and blue eyes, and a round spot of scarlet on his thin cheeks.

"I say, Charley, they say you are pious," began Bill Whitney that same day after lecture, when the man was bringing in the bread and cheese from the buttery.

He coloured to the roots of his light hair, and did not answer. Bill never minded what he said to any one.

"You were scout to Mr. Carstairs. Did you take his morals under your special protection?"

"Be quiet, Whitney," said Tod in an undertone.

"And constitute yourself his guardian-angel-in-ordinary? Didn't you go down on your knees to him with tears and sobs, and beseech him not to go to the bad?" went on Bill.

"There's not a word of truth in it, sir. One evening when Mr. Carstairs was lying on his sofa, tired and ill—for he was beginning to lead a life that had no rest in it, hardly, day or night, a folded slip of paper was brought in from Mr. Richardson, and Mr. Carstairs bade me read it to him. It was to remind him of some appointment for the night. Mr. Carstairs was silent for a minute: and then burst out with a kind of sharp cry, painful to hear. 'By Heaven, if this goes on, they'll ruin me, body and soul! I've a great mind not to go.' I did speak then, sir; I told him he was ill and had better stay at home; and I said that it was easy enough for him to pull up then, but that when one got too far on the down-hill path it was more difficult."

"Was that all?" cried Whitney.

"Every word, sir. I should not have spoken at all but that I had known Mr. Carstairs before we came here. Mr. Richardson made a great deal of it, and gave to it quite a different colouring."

"Did Mr. Carstairs turn you away for that?" I asked of Charley; when he came back for the things, and the other two had gone out.

"Three or four days after it happened, sir, Mr. Carstairs stopped my waiting on him again. I think it was through Mr. Richardson. Mr. Carstairs had refused to go out with him the evening it occurred."

"You knew Mr. Carstairs before he came to Oxford. Where was it?"

"It was——" he hesitated, and then went on. "It was at the school he was at in London, sir. I was a junior master there."

Letting a plate fall—for I was helping to pack them, wanting the table—I stared at the fellow. "A master there and——" and a servant here, I all but said, but I stopped the words.

"Only one of the outer masters, attending daily," he went on quietly.

"I taught writing and arithmetic, and English to the juniors."

"But how comes it that you are here in this post, Charley?"

"I had reasons for wishing to come to live at Oxford, sir."

"But why not have sought out something better than this?"

"I did seek, sir. But nothing of the kind was to be had, and this place offered. There's many a one, sir, falls into the wrong post in life, and can never afterwards get into the right one."

"But—do you—like this?"

"Like it, sir—no! But I make a living at it. One thing I shall be always grateful to Mr. Carstairs for: that he did not mention where he had known me. I should not like it to be talked of in the college, especially by Mr. Richardson."

He disappeared with his tray as he spoke. It sounded quite mysterious. But I took the hint, and said nothing.

The matter passed. Charley did not put on any mentorship to us,

and the more we saw of him the more we liked him. But an impression gradually dawned upon us that he was not strong enough for his place. The carrying up of a heavy tray upstairs would set him panting like an old man, and he could not run far or fast.

One day I was hard at work, Tod and Whitney being off somewhere, driving tandem, when a queer, ugly-sounding cough kept annoying me from outside: but whether it came from dog or man I could not tell. Opening the door at last, there sat Charley on the stairs, his head resting against the wall, and his cheeks brighter than a red leaf in autumn.

"What, is it you, Charley? Where did you pick up that cough?"

"I beg your pardon, sir," said he, starting up. "I thought your rooms were empty."

"Come in till the fit's over. You are in a regular draught there. Come along," for he hesitated—"I want to shut the door."

He came in, coughing finely, and I gave him the chair by the fire. It was nothing, he said, and would soon be gone. He had caught it a day or two back in the bleak east wind: the college was draughty, and he had to be on the run out of doors in all sorts of weather.

"Well, you know, Charley, putting east winds and draughts aside, you don't seem to be quite up to your work here in point of strength."

"I was up to it, sir, when I took it. It's a failing in some of our family, sir, to have weak lungs. I shall be all right again, soon."

The coughing was over, and he got up to go away, evidently not liking to intrude. There was a degree of sensitiveness about him that, of itself, might have shown he was superior to his position.

"Take a good jorum of treacle-posset, Charley, at bed-time."

* * * * *

Spring weather came in with February. The biting cold and snow of January disappeared, and genial sunshine warmed the earth again. The first Sunday in this same February month, from my place at morning service, looking out on the townsfolk who had come in with orders, I saw a lady, very little and pretty, staring fixedly at me from afar. The face—where had I seen her face? It seemed familiar, but I could not tell how or where I had known it. A small slight face of almost an ivory white, and wide-open light blue eyes that had plenty of confidence in them.

Sophie Chalk! I should have recognized her in the first moment but for the different mode in which her hair was dressed. Wonderful hair! A vast amount of it, and made the most of. She wore it of its natural colour to-day, brown, and the red tinge on it shone like burnished gold. She knew me; that was certain; and I could not help watching her. Her eyes went roving away presently, possibly in search of Tod. I stole a glance at him; but he did not appear to see her. What brought her to Oxford?

We got out of church. I took care to hold my tongue. Tod had

cared for Sophie Chalk—there could be little doubt of it—as one never cares for anybody again in life : and it might be just as well—in spite of the exposé of Mademoiselle's false ways and misdoings—that they did not meet. Syrens are syrens all the world over.

The day went on to a bright moonlight night. Tod and I, out for a stroll, were standing within the shade of the fine old Magdalen Tower, talking to a fellow of Trinity, when there came up a lady of delicate presence, the flowers in her bonnet exhaling a faint odour of perfume.

"I *think* I am not mistaken—I am sure—yes, I *am* sure it is Mr. Ludlow. And—surely that cannot be Mr. Todhetley?"

Tod wheeled round at the soft, false voice. The daintily gloved hand was held out to him ; the fair, false face was bent close : and his own face turned red and white with emotion. I saw it even in the shade of the moonlight. Had she been strolling about to look for us? Most likely. A few moments more, and we were all three walking onwards together.

"Only fancy my position !" she gaily said. "Here am I, all forlorn, set down alone in this great town, and must take care of myself as I best can. The formidable gowns and caps frighten me."

"The gowns and caps will do you no harm—Miss Chalk," cried Tod—and he only just saved himself from saying "Sophie."

"Do you think not," she returned, touching the sleeve of her velvet jacket, as if to brush off a fly. "But I beg you will accord me my due style and title, Mr. Todhetley, and honour me accordingly. I am no longer Missus Chalk. I am Mrs. Every."

So she had married Mr. Every after all ! She minced along between us in her silk gown, her hands in her ermine muff that looked made for a doll. At the private door of a shop in High Street she halted, rang the bell, and threw the door open.

"You will walk up and take a cup of tea with me. Nay, but you must—or I shall think you want to hold yourselves above poor little me, now you are grand Oxford men."

She went along the passage and up the stairs : there seemed no resource but to follow. In the sitting-room, which was very well furnished and looked out on the street, a fire burned brightly ; and a lamp and the tea-things stood on the table.

"Where have you been ?—keeping me waiting for my tea in this way ! You never think of anybody but yourself : never."

The querulous complaint, and thin, shrill voice came from a small dark girl who sat at the window, peering out into the lighted street. I had not forgotten the sharp-featured, sallow face and the deep-set eyes. It was Mabel Smith, the poor little lame and deformed girl I had seen in Torriana Square. She really did not look much older or bigger, and she spoke as abruptly as ever.

"I remember you, Johnny Ludlow."

Mrs. Every made the tea. Her dress, white one way, green the other, gleamed like silver in the lamplight. It had a quantity of white lace upon it: light green ribbons were twisted in her hair. "I should think it would be better to have those curtains drawn, Mabel. Your tea's ready: if you will come to it."

"But I choose to have the curtains open and I'll take my tea here," answered Mabel. "You may be going out again for hours, and what company should I have but the street? I don't like to be shut up in a strange room: I might see ghosts. Johnny Ludlow, that's a little coffee-table by the wall: if you'll put it here it will hold my cup and saucer."

I put it near her with her tea and plate of bread-and-butter.

"Won't you sit by me? I am very lonely. Those other two can talk to one another."

So I carried my cup and sat down by Mabel. The "other two," as Mabel put it, were talking and laughing. Tod was taking a lesson in tea-making from her, and she called him awkward.

"Are you living here?" I asked of Mabel under cover of the noise.

"Living here! no," she replied in her old abrupt fashion. "Do you think papa would let me be living over a shop in Oxford? My grand-mamma lives near the town, and she invited me down on a visit to her. There was no one to bring me, and she said *she* would"—indicating Sophie—"and we came yesterday. Well, would you believe it? Grand-mamma had meant *next* Saturday, and she could not take us in, having visitors already. I wanted to go back home; but she said she liked the look of Oxford, and she took these rooms for a week. Two guineas without fires and other extras; I call it dear. How came she to find you out, Johnny?"

"We met just now. She tells us she is Mrs. Every now."

"Oh yes, they are married. And a nice bargain Mr. Every has in her! Her dresses must cost twenty pounds apiece. Some of them *thirty* pounds! Look at the lace on that one. Mrs. Smith, papa's wife, gives her a good talking-to sometimes, telling her Mr. Every's income won't stand it. I should think it would not!—though I fancy he has a small share in papa's business now."

"Do they live in London?"

"Oh yes, they live in London. Close to us, too! In one of the small houses in Torriana Street. *She* wanted to take a large house in the square like ours, but Mr. Every was too wise."

Talking to this girl, my thoughts back in the past, I wondered whether Sophie's people had heard of the abstraction of Miss Deveen's emeralds. But it was not likely. To look at her now: watching her fascinating ease, listening to her innocent reminiscences of the time we had all

spent together at Lady Whitney's, I might have supposed she had taken a dose of the waters of Lethe, and that Sophie Chalk had always been guileless as a child ; an angel without wings.

"She has lost none of her impudence, Tod," I said as we went home. In the old days, you know, we used to say she'd fascinate the hair off our heads, give her the chance. She'd wile off the two ears as well now. A good thing she's married !"

Tod broke into a whistle, and went striding on.

Before the week was out, Sophie Chalk—we generally called her by the old name—had become intimate with some of the men of different colleges. Mabel Smith went to her grandmother's, and Sophie had nothing to do but exhibit her charms in the Oxford streets and entertain her friends. The time went on. Hardly an evening passed but Tod was there ; Bill Whitney went sometimes ; I rarely. Sophie did not fascinate me, whatever she might do by others. Sophie treated her guests to wine and spirits, and to unlimited packs of cards. Bill Whitney said one night in a joking way that he was not sure but she might be indicted for keeping a private gaming-house. Richardson was one of her frequent evening visitors, and she would let him take his bull-dogs to make a morning call. There would be betting over the cards in the evenings and she did not attempt to object. Sophie would not play herself ; she dispersed her fascinations amid the company while they played, and sang songs at the piano—one of the best pianos to be found in Oxford. There set in a kind of furore for pretty Mrs. Every ; the men who had the entrée there went wild over her charms, and vied with each other in making her costly presents. Sophie broke into raptures of delight over each with the seeming simplicity of a child, and swept all into her capacious net.

I think it was the receiving of those presents that was keeping her in Oxford ; or helping to keep her. Some of them were valuable. Very valuable indeed was a set of diamonds, brooch and ear-rings, that soft young calf, Gaiton, brought her ; but what few brains the viscount had were clean dazzled away by Sophie's attractions : and Richardson gave her a bejewelled fan that must have cost a small fortune. If Sophie Chalk did spend her husband's money, she was augmenting her stock of precious stones—and she had not lost her passion for them.

One morning my breakfast was brought in by a strange fellow, gloomy and grim. Tod had gone to breakfast with Mayhew.

"Where's Charley ?" I asked.

"Sick," was the short answer.

"What's the matter with him ?"

"Down with a cold, or something."

And we had this surly servant for ever so long to come : and I'm sorry to say got so accustomed to see his face as to forget sick Charley.

II.

"WILL you go up the river for a row, Johnny?"

"I don't mind if I do."

The questioner was Bill Whitney; who had come in to look for Tod. I had nothing particular on hand that afternoon, and the skies were blue and the sun golden. So we went down to the river together.

"Where has Tod got to?" he asked.

"Goodness knows. I've not seen him since lecture this morning."

We rowed up to Godstowe. Bill disappeared with some friend of his from Merton's, who had watched us put in. I strolled about. Everybody knows the dark pool of water there. On the bench under the foliage there, so thick in summer, but bare yet in this early season, warm and sunny though it was, sat a man wrapped in a greatcoat, whom I took at first to be a skeleton with painted cheeks. But one does not care to stare at skeletons, knowing they'd help their looks if they could; and I was passing him with my face turned the other way.

"Good afternoon, sir."

I turned at the hollow words—hollow in sound as though they came out of a drum. It was Charley: the red paint on his thin cheeks was nothing but natural hectic, and the blue of his eyes shone painfully bright.

"Why, what's the matter, Charley?"

"A fly-man, who had to drive here and back, brought me with him for a mouthful of fresh air, it being so warm and bright. It is the first time I have been able to get out, sir."

"You are poorly, Charley." I had all but said "dying." But one can but be complimentary to a poor fellow in that condition.

"Very ill I have been, sir; but I'm better. At one time I never thought I should get up again. It's this beautiful warm weather coming in so early that has restored me."

"I don't know about restored? You don't look great things yet."

"You should have seen me a short while ago, sir! I'm getting on."

Lying by his side, on a piece of paper, was a thick slice, doubled, of bread-and-butter, that he must have brought with him. He broke a piece off, and ate it.

"You look hungry, Charley."

"That's the worst of it, sir; I'm always hungry," he answered, and his tone from its eagerness was quite painful to hear, and his eyes grew moist, and the hectic spread on his cheeks. "It is the nature of the complaint, I'm told: and poor mother was the same. I could be eating and drinking every hour, sir, and hardly be satisfied."

"Come along to the inn, and have some tea."

"No, sir; no, thank you," he said, shrinking back. "I answered your remark thoughtlessly, sir, for it's the truth; not with any notion that it would make you ask me to take anything. And I've got my bread-and-butter here."

Going indoors, I told them to serve him a good tea, with a big dish of bacon and eggs, or some relishing thing of that sort. Whitney came in and heard me.

"You be hanged, Johnny! We are not going in for all that, here!"

"It's not for us, Bill; it's for that poor old scout, Charley. He's as surely dying as that you and I are talking. Come and look at him: you never saw such an object. I don't believe he gets enough to eat."

Whitney came, and did nothing but stare. Charley went indoors with a good deal of pressing, and we saw him sit down to the feast. Whitney stayed; I went out of doors again.

I remembered a similar case. It was that of a young woman who used to make Lena's frocks. She fell into a decline. Her appetite was wonderful. Anything good and substantial to eat and drink, she was always craving for: and it all seemed to do her no good. Charley Tasson's sickness must be of the same nature. She died: and he——

I was struck dumb! Seated on the bench under the trees, my thoughts back in that past time, there came two figures over the rustic bridge. A lady and gentleman, arm in arm: she in a hat and blue feather and dainty lace parasol; and he with bent head and words softened to a whisper. Tod!—and Sophie Chalk!

"Good gracious! There's Johnny Ludlow!"

She loosed his arm as she spoke, and came sailing up to me, her gold bracelets jingling as she gave her hand. I don't believe there are ten women in England who could get themselves up as effectively as did Sophie Chalk. Tod looked black as thunder.

"What the devil brings you here, Johnny?"

"I rowed up with Whitney."

A pause. "Who else is here?"

"Forbes of Merton: Whitney has been about with him. And I suppose a few others. We noticed a skiff or two waiting. Perhaps one was yours."

I spoke indifferently, determined he should not know I was put out. Seeing him there—I was going to say on the sly—with that beguiling syren, who was to foretell what pitfalls she might charm him into? He took Madame Sophie on his arm again to continue their promenade, and I lost sight of them.

I did not like it. It was not satisfactory. He had rowed her up—or perhaps driven her up—and was marching about with her tête-à-tête under the sweet spring sunshine. No great harm in itself this pastime: but he might get too fond of it. That she had re-acquired all her

strong influence over Tod's heart was clear as are the stars on a frosty night. Whitney called out to me that it was time to think of going back. I got into the boat with him, saying nothing.

Charley told me where he lived—"Up Stagg's Entry"—for I said I would call to see him. Just for a day or two there seemed to be no time; but I got there one evening when Tod had gone to the syren's. It was a dark, dusky place, this Stagg's Entry, and, I think, is done away with now, with several houses crowded into it. Asking for Charles Tasson, of a tidy, motherly woman on the stairs, she went before me, and threw open a door.

"Here's a gentleman to see you, Mr. Charley."

He was lying in a bed at the end of the room near the fire, under the lean-to roof. If I had been shocked at seeing him in the open air, in the glad sunshine, I was doubly so now in the dim light of the tallow candle. He rose in bed.

"It's very kind of you to come here, sir! I'm sure I didn't expect you to remember it."

"Are you worse, Charley?"

"I caught a fresh cold, sir, that day at Godstowe. And I'm as weak as a rat too—hardly able to creep out of bed. Nanny, bring a chair for this gentleman."

One of the handiest little girls I ever saw, with the same shining blue eyes that he had, and plump, pretty cheeks, laid hold of a chair. I took it from her and sat down.

"Is this your sister, Charley?"

"Yes, sir. There's only us two left together. We were eight of us once. Three went abroad, and one is in London, and two dead."

"What doctor sees you?"

"One comes in now and then, sir. My illness is not much in a doctor's way. There's nothing he could do: nothing for me but to wait patiently for summer weather."

"What have you had to eat to-day?"

"He had two eggs for his dinner: I boiled them," said little Nanny. "And Mrs. Cann brought us in six herrings, and I cooked one for tea; and he'll have some ale and bread and butter for supper."

She spoke like a little important housekeeper. But I wondered whether Charley was badly off.

Mrs. Cann, the same woman who had spoken to me, came out of her room opposite as I was going away. She followed me down stairs, and began to talk in an undertone. "A sad thing, ain't it, sir, to see him a lying there so helpless; and to know that it has laid hold of him for good and all. He caught it from his mother."

"How do you mean?"

"She died here in that room, just as the winter come in, with the same complaint—decline they call it; and he waited on her and

nursed her, and must have caught it of her. A good son he was. They were well off once, sir, but the father just brought 'em to beggary; and Charley—he had a good education of his own—came down from London when his mother got ill, and looked out for something to do here that he might stay with her. At first he couldn't find anything; and when he was at a sore pinch, he took a place at Christchurch college as scout's helper. He had to pocket his pride: but there was Nanny as well as his mother."

"I see."

"He'd been teacher in a school up in London, sir, by day, and in the evenings he used to help some young clergyman as scripture-reader to the poor in one of them crowded parishes we hear tell of: he was always one for trying to do what good he could. Naturally he'd be disheartened at falling to be a bed-maker in a college, and I'm afraid the work was too hard for him: but, as I say, he was a good son. The mother settled in Oxford after her misfortunes."

"How is he supported now? And the little girl?"

"It's not over much of a support," said Mrs. Cann with disparagement. "Not for him, that's a craving for meat and drink every hour. The eldest brother is in business in London, sir, and he sends them what they have. Perhaps he's not able to do more."

It was not late. I thought I would, for once, pay Mrs. Every a visit. A run of three minutes, and I was at her door.

They were there—the usual set. Tod, and Richardson, and Lord Gaiton, and the two men from Magdalen, and—well, it's no use enumerating—seven or eight in all. Richardson and another were quarrelling at écarté, four were at whist; Tod was sitting apart with Sophie Chalk.

She was got up like a fairy at the play, in a cloud of thin white muslin; her hair hanging around and sparkling with gold dust, and little gleams of gold ornaments shining about her. If ever Joseph Todhetley had need to pray against falling into temptation, it was during the weeks of that unlucky term.

"This is quite an honour, Johnny Ludlow," said Madame Sophie, rising to meet me, her eyes sparkling with what might have been taken for the most hearty welcome. "It is not often you honour my poor little room, sir."

"It is not often I can find the time for it, Mrs. Every. Tod, I came in to see whether you were ready to go in."

He looked at his watch hastily, fearing it might be later than it was; and answered curtly and coolly.

"Ready?—no. I have not had my revenge yet at écarté."

Approaching the écarté table, he sat down. Mrs. Every drew a chair behind Lord Gaiton, and looked over his hand.

The days passed. I had two cares on my mind, and they bothered me.

The one was Tod and his dangerous infatuation ; the other, poor dying Charley Tasson. Tod was losing frightfully at those card-tables. Night after night it went on. Tod's steps were drawn thither by a fascination irresistible : and whether the cards or their mistress were the more subtle potion for him, or what was to be the ending of it all, no living being could tell.

As to Stagg's Entry, my visits to it had grown nearly as much into a habit as Tod's had to High Street. When I stayed away for a night, little Nanny would whisper to me the next that Charley had not taken his eyes off the door. Sick people always like to see visitors.

"Don't let him want for anything, Johnny," said Tod. "The Pater would blow us up."

The time ran on, and the sands of Charley's life ran with it. One Wednesday evening upon going in late, and not having many minutes to stay, I found him on the bed in a dead faint, and the candle guttering in the socket. Nanny was nowhere. I went across the passage to Mrs. Cann's, and she was nowhere. It was an awkward situation ; for I declare that for the moment I thought he was gone.

Knowing most of Nanny's household secrets, I looked in the candle-box for a fresh candle. Charley was stirring then, and I gave him some wine. He had had a similar fainting fit at midday, he said, which had frightened them, and Nanny had fetched the doctor. She was gone now, he supposed, to fetch some medicine.

"Is this the end, sir?"

He asked it quite calmly. I could not tell : but to judge by his wan face I thought it might be. And my time was up and more than up : and neither Nanny nor Mrs. Cann came. The wine revived him and he seemed better ; quite well again : well, for him. But I did not like to leave him alone.

"Would you mind reading to me, sir?" he asked.

"What shall I read, Charley?"

"It may be for the last time, sir. I'd like to hear the service for the burial of the dead."

So I read it every word, the long lesson, and all. Nanny came in before it was finished, medicine in hand, and sat down in silence with her bonnet on. She had been kept at the doctor's. Mrs. Cann was the next to make her appearance, having been abroad on some business of her own : and I got away when it was close upon midnight.

"Your name and college, sir."

"Ludlow. Christchurch."

It was the proctor. He had pounced full upon me as I was racing home. And the clocks were striking twelve !

"Ludlow—Christchurch," he repeated, nodding his head.

"I am sorry to be out so late, sir, and break rules, but I could not help it. I have been sitting with a sick man."

"Very good," said he blandly; "you can tell that to-morrow to the Dean. Home at once to your quarters now, if you please, Mr. Ludlow."

And I knew he believed me just as much as he would had I told him I'd been up in a balloon.

"You are a nice lot, Master Johnny!"

The salutation was Tod's. He and Bill Whitney were sitting over the fire in our room.

"I couldn't help being late."

"Of course not! As to late—it's only midnight. Next time you'll come in with the milk."

"Don't jest. I've been with that poor Charley, and I think he's dying. The worst of it is, the proctor has just dropped upon me."

"No!" It sobered them both, and they put aside their mockery. Bill, who had the tongs in his hand, let them go down with a crash.

"It's a thousand pities, Johnny. Not one of us has been before the Dean yet."

"I can only tell the Dean the truth."

"As if he'd believe you! By Jupiter! Once get one of our names up, and those proctors will track every step of the ground we tread on. They watch a marked man as a starving cat watches a mouse."

With the morning came in the requisition for me to attend before the Dean. When I got there, who should be stealing out of the room quite sheepishly, his face down and his ears red, but Gaiton.

"Is it your turn, Ludlow!" he cried, closing the room door as softly as though the Dean had been asleep inside.

"What have you been had up for, Gaiton?"

"Oh, nothing. I got knocking about a bit last night, for Mrs. Every did not receive, and came across that confounded proctor."

"Is the Dean in a hard humour?"

"Hard enough, and be hanged to him! It's not the Dean: he's ill, or something; perhaps been making a night of it himself: and Apple-rigg's on duty for him. Dry old scarecrow! For two pins, Ludlow, I'd take my name off the books, and be shut of the lot."

Dr. Apple-rigg had the reputation of being one of the strictest of college dons. He was like a maypole, just as tall and thin, with a long, sallow face, and enough learning to set up the reputations of three archbishops for life. The Doctor was marching up and down the room in his college cap, and turned his spectacles on me.

"Shut the door, sir."

While I did as I was bid, he sat down at an open desk near the fire and looked at a paper that had some writing on it.

"What age may you be, Mr. Ludlow?" he sternly asked, when a question or two had passed. And I told him my age.

"Oh! And don't you think it a very disreputable thing, a great

discredit, sir, for a young fellow of your years to be found abroad by your proctor at midnight ? ”

“ But I could not help being late, sir, last night ; and I was not abroad for any purpose of pleasure. I had been staying with a poor fellow who is sick : dying, in fact : and—and it was not my fault, sir.”

“ Take care, young man,” said he, glaring through his spectacles. “ There’s one thing I can never forgive if deliberately told me, and that’s a lie.”

“ I should be sorry to tell a lie, sir,” I answered : and by the annoyance so visible in his looks and tones, it was impossible to help fancying he had found out, or thought he had found out, Gaiton in one. “ What I have said is truth.”

“ Go over again what you did say,” cried he, very shortly, after looking at his paper again and then hard at me. And I went over it.

“ *What* do you say the man’s name is ? ”

“ Charles Tasson, sir. He was our scout until he fell ill.”

“ Pray do you make a point, Mr. Ludlow, of visiting all the scouts and their friends who may happen to fall sick ? ”

“ No, sir,” I said uneasily, for there was ridicule in his tone, and I knew he did not believe a word. “ I don’t suppose I should ever have thought to visit Tasson, but for seeing him look so ill one afternoon up at Godstowe.”

“ He must be very ill to be at Godstowe ! ” cried Dr. Applerigg. “ Very ! ”

“ He was so ill, sir, that I thought he was dying then. Some fly-man he knew had driven him to Godstowe for the sake of the air.”

“ But what’s your *motive*, may I ask, for going to sit with him ? ” He had a way of laying emphasis on certain of his words.

“ There’s no motive, sir : except that he is lonely and dying.”

The Doctor looked at me for what seemed ten minutes. “ What is this sick man’s address, pray ? ”

I told him the address in Staggs’s Entry ; and he wrote it down, telling me to present myself again before him the following morning.

That day, I met Sophie Chalk ; her husband was with her. She nodded and seemed gay as air : he looked dark and sullen as he took off his hat. I carried the news into college.

“ Sophie Chalk has got her husband down, Tod.”

“ Queen Anne’s dead,” retorted he.

“ Oh, you knew it ! ” And I might have guessed that he did by his not having spent the past evening in High Street, but in a fellow’s rooms at Oriel. And he was as cross as two sticks.

“ What a *fool* she must have been to go and throw herself away upon that low fellow Everty ! ” he exclaimed, putting his shoulders against the mantelpiece and stamping on the carpet with one heel.

“ Throw herself away ! Well, Tod, opinions vary. I think she was

lucky to get him. As to his being low, we don't know that he is. Putting aside that one mysterious episode of his being down at our place in hiding, which I suppose we shall never come to the bottom of, we know nothing of what Every has, or has not been."

"You shut up, Johnny. Common sense is common sense."

"Every's being here—we can't associate with him, you know, Tod—affords a good opportunity for breaking off the visits to High Street."

"Who wants to break off the visits to High Street?"

"I do, for one. Madame Sophie's is a dangerous atmosphere."

"Dangerous for you, Johnny?"

"Not a bit of it. *You* know. Be wise in time, old fellow."

"Of all the muffs living, Johnny, you are about the greatest. In the old days you feared I might go in for marrying Sophie Chalk. I don't see what you can fear now. Do you suppose I should run away with another man's wife?"

"Nonsense, Tod!"

"Well, what else is it? Come! Out with it."

"Do you think our people or the Whitneys would like it if they knew we are intimate with her?"

"They'd not die of it, I expect."

"I don't like her, Tod. It is not a nice thing of her to allow the play and the betting, and to have all those fellows there when they choose."

Tod took his back from the mantelpiece, and sat down to his imposition: one he had to write for having missed chapel.

"You mean well, Johnny, though you are a muff."

Later in the day I met Dr. Applerigg. He signed to me to stop. "Mr. Ludlow, I find that what you told me this morning was true. And I withdraw every word of condemnation that I spoke. I wish I had never greater cause to find fault than I have with you, in regard to this matter. Not that I can sanction your being out so late, although the plea of excuse *be* a dying man. You understand?"

"Yes, sir. It shall not occur again."

Down at the house in Stagg's Entry, that evening, Mrs. Cann met me on the stairs. "One of the great College Doctors was here to-day, sir. He came up asking all manner of questions about you—whether you'd been here till a'most midnight yesterday, and what you'd stayed so late for, and—and all about it."

Dr. Applerigg! "What did you tell him, Mrs. Cann?"

"Tell him, sir! what should I tell him but the truth? That you had stayed here late because of Charley's being took worse and nobody with him, and had read the burial service to him for his asking; and that you came most evenings, and was just as good to him as gold. He said he'd see Charley for himself then; and he went in and talked to him, oh so gently and nicely about his soul; and gave little Nanny half a crown when he went away. Sometimes it happens, sir, that those

who look to have the hardest faces have the gentlest hearts. And Charley's dying, sir. He was took worse again this evening at five o'clock, and I hardly thought he'd have lasted till now. The doctor has been, and thinks he'll go off quietly."

Quietly perhaps in one sense, but it was a restless death-bed. He was not still a minute; but he was quite sensible and calm. Waking up out of a doze when I went in, he held out his hand.

"It is nearly over, sir."

I was sure of that, and sat down in silence. There could be no mistaking his looks.

"I have just had a strange dream," he whispered, between his laboured breath; and his eyes were wet with tears, and he looked curiously agitated. "I thought I saw mother. It was in a wide place, all light and sunshine, too beautiful for anything but Heaven. Mother was looking at me; I seemed to be outside in dulness and darkness, and not to know how to get in. Others that I've known in my lifetime, and who have gone on before, were there, as well as mother; they all looked happy, and there was a soft strain of music, like nothing I ever heard in this world. All at once, as I was wondering how I could get in, my sins seemed to rise up before me in a great cloud; I turned sick, thinking of them; for I knew no sinful person might enter there. Then I saw One standing on the brink! it could only have been Jesus; and he held out his hand to me and smiled, 'I am here to wash out your sins,' he said, and I thought he touched me with his finger; and oh, the feeling of delight that came over me, of repose, of bliss, for I knew that all earth's troubles were over, and I had passed into rest and peace for ever."

Nanny came up, and gave him one or two spoonfuls of wine.

"I don't believe it was a dream," he said, after a pause. "I think it was sent to show me what it is I am entering on; to uphold me through the darksome valley of the shadow of death."

"Mother said she should be watching for us, you know, Charley," said the child.

A restless fit came over him again, and he stirred uneasily. When it had passed, he was still for awhile and then looked up at me.

"It was the new Heaven and the new Earth, sir, that we are told of in the Revelation. Would you mind, sir—just those few verses—reading them to me for the last time?"

Nanny brought the Bible, and put the candle on the stand, and I read what he asked for—the first few verses of the twenty-first chapter. The little girl knelt down by the bed and joined her hands together.

"That's enough, Nanny," I whispered. "Put the candle back."

"But I did not tell all my dream," he resumed; "not quite all. As I passed over into Heaven, I thought I looked down here again. I

could see the places in the world ; I could see this same Oxford city. I saw the men here in it, sir, at their cards and their dice and their drink ; at all their thoughtless folly. Spending their days and nights without a care for the end, without as much as thinking whether they need a Saviour or not. And oh, their condition troubled me ! I seemed to understand all things plainly then, sir. And I thought if they would but once lift up their hearts to him, even in the midst of their sin, he would take care of them even then, and save them from it in the end—for he was tempted himself once, and knows how sore their temptations are. In my distress, I tried to call out and tell them this, and it awoke me.”

“Do you think he ought to talk, sir?” whispered Nanny. But nothing more could harm him now.

My time was up, and I ought to be going. Poor Charley spoke so imploringly—almost as though the thought of it startled him.

“Not yet, sir; not yet ! Stay a bit longer with me. It is for the last time.”

And I stayed : in spite of my word passed to Dr. Applerigg. It seems to me a solemn thing to cross the wishes of the dying.

So the clock went ticking on. Mrs. Cann stole in and out, and a lodger from below came in and looked at him. Before twelve all was over.

I went hastening home, not much caring whether the proctor met me again, or whether he didn't, for in any case I must go to Dr. Applerigg in the morning, and tell him I had broken my promise to him, and why. Close at the gates some one overtook and passed me.

It was Tod. Tod with a white face and his hair damp with running. He had come from Sophie Chalk's.

“What is it, Tod?”

I laid my hand upon his arm in speaking. He threw it off with a word that was very like an imprecation.

“What *is* the matter?”

“The devil's the matter. Mind your own business, Johnny.”

“Have you been quarrelling with Every?”

“Every be hanged ! The man has betaken himself off.”

“How much have you lost to-night?”

“Cleaned-out, lad. That's all.”

We got to our room in silence. Tod turned over some cards that lay on the table, and trimmed the candle from a thief.

“Tasson's dead, Tod.”

“A good thing if some of us were dead,” was the answer. And he turned into his chamber and bolted the door.

There's more to come ; for Tod was on the downward path.

A Happy New Year to Everybody !

FROM LONDON TO SALZBURG.

"THE brain wants a holiday," said the learned doctor I had consulted. "You cannot do better than go over to Gastein for three months. Or, if you would prefer it, take a trip to Alexandria and back in a P. and O. steamer."

This was no doubt good advice; but to leave work behind me for so long a time seemed about as possible as to undertake a journey to the moon, or the conversion of the South-Sea Islanders. Still it has been said of old time that when there's a will there's a way: and though this proverb should of right belong to the gentler sex to whom it is certainly more applicable: it was not so very long after the advice had been given, that by a train of circumstances favourable to the project, I was enabled to put it into execution.

So it happened that one morning I found myself, with a companion, on the point of starting from home and work, from familiar scenes and faces, and well-known haunts, into an uncertain fate and future. Good-byes were over. Those good-byes that are always sad in this world, because a type of that last look, that last handshake, that last twining of the arms that comes to each at the closing scene of all. At such times the still small voice is wont to make itself heard above the rattle of carriages and the roar of trains, as we wonder whether it is recorded of us that we shall again look upon those loved faces from which we have just parted.

But after all there is something exhilarating in rapidity of motion: a sense of pleasure and of power in being whirled away at the rate of fifty miles an hour: which scatters from the mind all those dull vapours that affect the heart: and so, whether we will or not, we yield ourselves up to the pure enjoyment of the hour: the sunshine and the quick-changing scene.

On starting from Charing Cross the sky was gray and cold. In less than half an hour the clouds had rolled away, and we were in the full glory of an early spring morning at the beginning of May, 1870.

On nearing Dover, many anxious faces were thrust out of various compartments for a glimpse of the sea, which happily was calm, blue, and unruffled as a lake. Not the shade of a ripple, not the ghost of a swell, could be conjured up by the liveliest imagination. A general murmur of approbation like the humming of bees; an access of colour to cheeks that had grown pale and paler yet; an increased interest in sundry packets of sandwiches, that is so English and so unpleasant; and we steamed on to the harbour.

After many inquiries, which resulted in as many differences of opinion;

after many silent meditations ; I had decided to cross over to Ostend, in preference to any other route : to take Bruges and Ghent on the way ; Brussels, Aix-la-Chapelle, Cologne, Coblenz, Munich, and Salzburg. And this plan was carried out with the exception of a slight alteration at Coblenz, to enable us to visit the wonderful, old-world town of Nuremberg.

When the train had stopped and dislodged its load of passengers, we went on board the Ostend boat, and my last remembrances of land were the frantic efforts of a man endeavouring to call attention to the fact that there was due to him the sum of fourpence for the transport of luggage. But at that moment the rope slacked, the paddles turned, the boat parted from the side. As we steamed away the man threw himself into all the attitudes of rage and disappointment, and called upon the captain to put back in a manner that none but a hardened nature could have resisted.

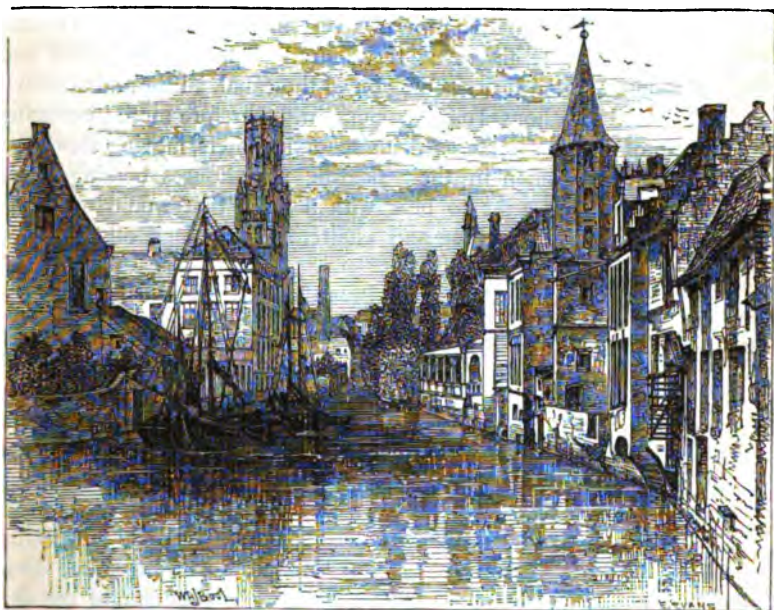
The white cliffs, dazzling in the sunshine, gradually melted away in the distance ; one object after another flickered and went out, until at length the English coast was nothing more than a recollection and a dream. As the morning waned the water proved less calm ; and a few of the passengers began to experience a little of those realities that undoubtedly knock all romance out of the most highly strung imaginations ; and into many pairs of eyes there came that look which may be interpreted as a mute appeal to be cast into the sea. But Time sets right all these temporary derangements. Presently, Dunkerque was passed afar off, its great tower, containing those wonderful chimes that challenge all others for sweetness, just visible. Then the flat coast of Belgium : and in due time the good ship was at anchor in the Ostend harbour.

How dreary and dismal the place looked, shut up and divested of its summer appendages, gay visitors included. How unattractive it seemed even when fancy coloured it with the life and warmth of a full-flowing season. How the wind whistled down its bare, ill-paved streets, blowing the sand into eyes and mouth, causing coats to be wrapped round more closely, collars put up, and caps drawn over eyes and ears. How comfortable to cross the bridge of the basin and disappear within shelter of the station !

In a few minutes the train started and very soon reached Bruges. It happened to be a Fête-day. The station was crowded with people of all classes ; town-folk and peasants in all the costumes of the nation : the latter for the most part of so low a type of countenance as may be seldom seen ; more so than you will ever meet with amongst the villages of France : many of the men repulsive both in feature and expression ; some of them almost less than human.

It was a relief to turn from them towards the town. The streets were decorated with flags and evergreens, after-signs of a procession ; one of those everlasting processions that are for ever taking

place in Roman Catholic countries. Stretched across the streets from the upper windows of the houses were ropes holding flags and flowers, and bell-shaped ornaments made of pieces of tobacco-pipe and red flannel; the ends finished off with bits of glass cut in diamonds, that jangled in the wind with an incessant but not unpleasant sound. Here and there stood an altar in process of demolition, nothing left of the grandeur that had been but the boards, carpets, and green branches. The streets were still crowded with gaily dressed men and women, promenading about arm in arm with that air that only foreigners know how to assume. Chattering, laughing, sauntering; now hailing a camarade and forcing him to link in with them; now breaking out into the ram-



BRUGES CANAL, WITH PARTIAL VIEW OF BELFRY.

pant chorus of some popular song. The quiet streets of Bruges were alive with noise and jollity, so that to get an impression of the town in its every-day aspect was impossible. It was the *Mois de Marie*, and the people were doing homage thereto in a manner that agreeably combined both the sacred and the profane.

Space will not permit us to linger, or to give even a short record of what was to be seen there. Returning to the station by way of the canal—which, with its old houses, and a view of the belfry whose praises Longfellow has sung, was a refreshing picture of quiet life—we found it more crowded than ever. People were talking in loud voices, some

in the bad French often heard in Belgium, others kissing and making fierce adieux and giving last messages and instructions. All was noise and confusion ; and as the Ghent train slowly rolled in and slowly rolled out again, leisurely as a fat Dutchman smoking his midday pipe, we were not sorry to find ourselves clear of the whirl and uproar of a Bruges Fête-day.

From Bruges to Ghent the country was flat and uninteresting, but the journey was soon over, and we were glad to find the old town in its ordinary, every-day repose. It still possesses many traces of that dead and gone greatness that in the time of Charles V. made it perhaps the largest and most populous city in Europe. There are few signs of decay about it, and it is yet one of the finest old towns to be seen. A not unpleasant place to live in, and a very inexpensive one. At each step there was something new to admire. First the cathedral and belfry : then a sudden turn opening on to the canal, all life and activity ; its banks lined with houses more ancient, and therefore more interesting than those of Bruges. Barges being loaded ; others, moving slowly on towed by men ; women in their floating wash-houses beating linen, bringing down their arms to bear with a force that would not have shamed a blacksmith, laughing and chattering with each other as they worked.

The next morning we started for Brussels. All the world knows the place ; even those who have never been there have heard it so often described that they can see it as in a dream. In the evening, we strolled out through stiff, straight avenues of the Park to the Palais de la Nation, and turning down hill to the left came upon the splendid church of Ste. Gudule, magnificent in the twilight. The lace shops were worthy their reputation, and doubtless have witnessed many a piece of extravagance since spoken of only in whispers.

Past these, we reached the Grande Place ; one of the interesting spots of Europe. This in truth is Old Brussels. In front in the deepening twilight, its slender spire cutting the clear background of the sky, was the Hôtel de Ville, exceeding in beauty all those exquisite buildings for which the Netherlands are famous, and of which the people are so proud. On all sides stood the ancient and richly decorated houses of the guilds ; and facing the Hôtel de Ville, most imposing of all, La Maison du Roi, in which Egmont and Horn, passed the last night of their lives.

Early the next morning we left the noise and bustle of Brussels behind us. The journey to Aix-la-Chapelle was pleasant and refreshing, for until now there had been little scenery to occupy the attention. First came the rich plain in its gay spring dress. Then, on approaching Liège hills, gradually appeared, growing high and higher, until, winding through them, a glimpse was caught of the beautiful Meuse, which runs through some of the loveliest scenery of Northern Europe.

Liège town lies in a valley, the hills falling back in a sort of amphitheatre, cut and crossed by numerous towers and spires.

Aix-la-Chapelle at last: and in the drive from the station to the Hôtel du Grand Monarque the eye searched in vain for some signs of its antiquity. Though one of the oldest towns in Germany, nothing was visible beyond wide streets, and an unbroken line of modern houses, straight, stiff, and respectable, but guiltless of any more romantic idea than that of a prosperous watering-place.

The next morning we took one of the loveliest drives in the world. A continual ascent through groves of beeches, now in their greatest beauty, between which at intervals gleamed the rich plain below. Leaving the carriage at the top of the hill, and crossing to a break in the trees, a view opened to the sight not often surpassed. For miles stretched the rich and gently undulating plain, dotted over with towns and villages. In a slight dépression rather than valley, lay Aix, looking venerable enough now with its cupolas and towers. In the midst of the city rose the Chapelle of Charlemagne, conspicuous by its dome and architecture, fashioned after the Holy Temple at Jerusalem. Above was the deep blue sky; and overshadowing us, a hawthorn, throwing far and wide its delicious scent. Rejoicing in the spring and sunshine, the birds seemed to outvie each other in songs of praise. Every sense was soothed and gratified, and the mind wandered away in thought to ages far remote, when this rich and fertile plain was the scene of mighty combats; of power struggling against power, and light against darkness. From the time when the Romans first extended their arms northward, the land over which we now gazed had been the scene of all that is most interesting in history, and had taken part in all the great struggles of Europe.

That same day a far different scene stood before us. A few hours' journey brought us to Cologne, and the quickly passing time was chiefly spent in examining its wonderful treasure. As we entered the cathedral singing was going on in the choir, and the effect of the far-off voices was to throw the hearer into a species of trance. I sat down and listened, enraptured, to the grand tones of the organ, as they went surging and swelling through the mighty space. It seemed almost too great and awful to have been raised by human hands. Gazing upwards at the enormous height, and onwards through the long vista of pillars and arches, I caught them sometimes singly and sometimes in clusters as they intersected each other; here and there dyed by the coloured beams of light, as they struggled through the richly stained windows. All sense of the world was lost. When the organ ceased, and priests and choristers filed out, I walked through the forest-like building, and slowly paced its aisles. The distant choir looked more a vision than anything earthly, with its aisles and arches, its pillars and statues, all veiled in the softened, religious light of the ancient and beautiful windows.

Of the exterior, the east end is the gem, so grand, so beautiful in the light and shade caused by the numerous chapels, the flying buttresses and piers and pinnacles; all so delicately wrought that it was difficult to say which gave most delight: its fairy-like minuteness of detail, or its boldness and grandeur of outline—unlike the rest of the building, softened by that great beautifier as well as destroyer, Time. When the cathedral stands complete, with its triple spires of pierced work, it will indeed be one of the glories, not only of Germany, but of the whole world. A triumph of the mind of man, who, out of the rock of the wilderness has created a thing of beauty so rare and exquisite: a tribute of praise and adoration to the Maker of all beauty and all power.

The journey to Coblenz at first was not particularly striking, but it soon grew very beautiful. A rich, green plain, sprinkled with fruit-trees white [and heavy with blossom. Avenues of lindens and horse-chestnuts stretching far away in the distance; so cool and calm, that you longed to jump out and throw yourself under their shade, and dream away the hours. After passing Bonn, the plain was quitted for the left bank of the Rhine, and the scene now became more grand and wild. But the train whirled on so quickly that it afforded scarcely more than a glimpse at places with which one would like to grow familiar. High up in the air once we caught sight of an eagle, his outspread wings cutting the clear sky; his flight majestic; now as it were reposing upon the air, and now, with a calm, dignified sweep, soaring away beyond sight. When Coblenz was reached we were not sorry that we made up our minds to take here two or three days' rest.

The view from the windows of the *Hôtel du Géant* was enough to lure one on to a far longer sojourn. Here you have the Rhine in one of its most beautiful and romantic spots. Before us flowed the calm, grand river, the castle and fortress of Ehrenbreitstein forming a background to the view. Later we crossed the bridge of boats, and went up into the opposite heights. Darkness had come on, and the scene was enchanting. The pale beams of the moon were thrown upon the water, which caught their brightness, and carried it rippling and sparkling far down the stream. You might fancy that a mermaid had passed that way, her passage lighted up by millions of tiny lamps that burnt on to do her homage. Hundreds of nightingales filled the air with a flow of melody, sufficiently distant not to disturb the feeling of repose that crept over the spirit as it gazed in silence upon the unearthly scene. It would have been easy to have passed the whole night there in contemplation, unbroken by thought of sleep.

Later on, indeed, with windows open to the river, the song of the birds came floating across the wide stream, so distinct and incessant, yet so beautiful in softness and melody, that sleep was charmed away. It was an utterly delightful sensation: listening to the bird-music; to an occa-

sional plash upon the water from some midnight oar ; to feel that between this and England there was the difference not of space merely, but of a world ; that it was Wonderland ; Rhineland ; the land of poetry and beauty and romance ; of much that is great and noble ; glorious in nature, eminent in man, strong in genius.

Once I went out on to the balcony. The stars were flashing like diamonds, the moon was still visible, bright and silvery in the dark blue. Everything was wrapped in night. The fortress was sunk in gloom, save for the light and shade thrown out by the moonlight. The heights and the sky seemed to have melted into one ; not a soul was abroad. On all lay the stillness of sleep and repose ; the death of nature. But, wafted across the stream in wave after wave of melody, floating, throbbing, soft and beautiful as the song of an Eastern dream, came the notes sweet, clear, and unceasing of the nightingales.

We had intended to go from Coblenz to Munich, but changed our plans to visit that wonderful old place, Nuremberg.

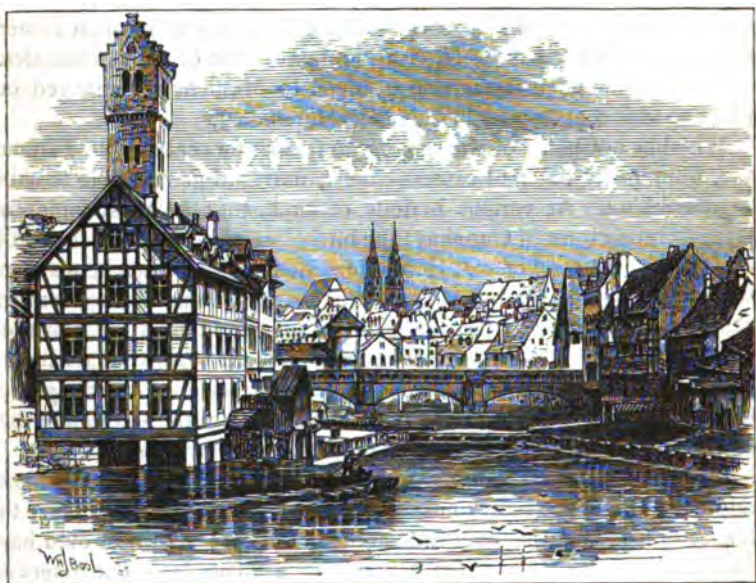
Who has not heard of Nuremberg, so famous for centuries ? Famous, too, from many different causes—like a universal genius, able to shine in everything. At various periods of its history the most important manufacturing town in Germany ; the birthplace of inventions ; the cradle of the fine arts, the home of German freedom. With Nuremberg's name will ever be linked that of Albert Durer ; each gaining dignity from the other. Nuremberg was just the place to give light to a great painter, though in those days some three or four hundred years younger than it is now. Yet its narrow, straggling, uneven streets ; its quaint, gabled houses, could never have had a childhood or youth. Certainly they look old enough now to satisfy the most exacting lover of antiquity.

The hotel was a large, rambling building, with staircases and passages and corridors in the most unexpected, out-of-the-way places. After the luxury of Coblenz it seemed rude and comfortless ; yet who would have had it different ? From the windows of a room, large but otherwise guiltless of comfort, we looked down upon a scene before which, in spite of fatigue and hunger, I remained long riveted. No longer the beauty of scenery ; of winding rivers and green trees ; of fruit blossoms, and cloud-capped mountains. These had given place to the work of man, but of a generation long since gone to their rest. How hard to realise that human ingenuity had produced the surrounding buildings ! It was the record, the silent monument, of a past age ; testifying to the things and people that had been ; showing them up in all the dignity of their mind, the simplicity of their nature.

How easy to imagine Albert Dürer threading these streets more than three centuries ago, their still dignity so in accordance with that of his own temperament. The place once seen, it seems possible to trace a subtle link of connection between it and his pictures. His old house appears just as he left it, and is now inhabited by a band of artists who

reverentially treat the old place for his sake. Looking down upon it, you might fancy you saw his large, sweet face, with the soft, gentle eyes peering at you from out the dark shadows. In the cemetery just outside the town, stands his grave—which, nevertheless, it is thought does not actually hold his body—and the grave of his dearest friend (not his wife, alas, for poor Dürer); and though they lie not side by side, yet they are near enough, doubtless, to find each other in that great day, when they shall awake for ever from their long, silent slumber.

He sleeps calmly; he has forgotten the world; he rests from his labours and his domestic troubles; but the world is faithful to him, and remembers him as well now as in the days of his youth and strength.



NUREMBERG.

The little woman in the picture-gallery, as she swung back the shutters of paintings by other and less celebrated men, talked of him long and fast. She seemed as proud of him as if he had been her own ancestor, and bewailed the fate that debarred her from keeping guard over his pictures. But Nuremberg, that gave light to these riches, possesses them not. For the world perhaps it is as well, since comparatively few people visit the ancient town.

The next day, Sunday, the whole place seemed to have turned out for a holiday, dressed in its best: and many a strange contrast might have been drawn between the old streets and houses, and the smart caps and coats and dresses of a more modern fashion. It was impossible to help fancying that the old town in which these people lived, the quaint

buildings, must have some influence upon their minds and character. Scarcely possible to grow up with a nature altogether hard, prosy, and unromantic. Yet no great men come from it now; the glory of the town has passed away. But the beauty and grandeur of its antiquity; the strange impression of a past world, a dead age, that comes over you as you walk its streets, nothing can take away, and perhaps no other town can give.

Time passes quickly when counted by days and hours. Soon, therefore, we had bidden farewell to Nuremberg, and were once more en voyage, with faces turned towards Munich.

That gay, lively, charming capital. The home of artists; that has not only nursed them, but cherishes and hands down to fame and posterity so many of their best works. A long drive in the clattering, springless omnibus landed us, about ten o'clock at night, at the *Hôtel des Quatre Saisons*, a large, comfortable building, conducted, omnibus excepted, on excellent principles.

Early the next morning, I was awakened by the tramp of soldiers marching past, and a splendid band, that caused me to spring up, even at the first moment of consciousness, with a feeling of being far away from England. But how different was the town at a subsequent visit! Now all was quiet and peaceful; people were going about their work as if nothing would ever occur to interrupt the even current of their lives; no foreshadowing of evil was creeping into their hearts; no silent messenger whispering to the young maidens, wives, mothers, that ere long many of them would mourn a lover, husband, or child. But the change was coming; at that second, later, visit the decree had gone forth. Then everything was hurry, and excitement, and emotion. The streets re-echoed with the tramp of soldiers, as regiment after regiment passed through them on their way to battle. Those who remember how the Bavarian troops distinguished themselves; how they were invariably put in front of the fight, and thrown into all positions of danger—unfair as it seems and reads—will realize how vast a number of those brave men never returned to the hearts and homes made desolate for ever. The town was all excitement. The faces of men and women had grown long; eyes red with weeping; hearts heavy and oppressed; steps uncertain, here rapid and nervous, there slow and lingering; the result of a trouble too great to bear. All speech, save on the one absorbing topic, had been abandoned.

But at our first visit to Munich none of these rumours and signs of preparations had not yet appeared; the storm-clouds then gathering, though not so very far below the horizon, were still unsuspected.

Salzburg was to be the next and final destination before Gastein, and one hot, sunny morning we turned our faces thitherward. The journey, most picturesque and interesting, lying amongst views differing from any yet encountered, lasted some hours, almost constantly in sight of the

great Alpine range of mountains to the south. When Salzburg was at length reached, we found ourselves amidst a perfect intoxication of gorgeous landscape.

It was indeed wonderful. The view from the windows of the *Hôtel de l'Europe* could never be forgotten.

Below, at some little distance, lay the town, its houses shining out white and hot in the glaring sunshine. Towering on the summit of a rock, was the castle, once the residence of the archbishops, but long since dismantled of its glories of state and splendour. . Around, stretched the mountains, pile after pile, one above another, the dazzling snow a strange, unearthly sight in the midst of heat so intense. Through the town, with the speed of a torrent, cleaving its way between the chain of Noric Alps, rushed the Salza; sweeping on past hills and vales, wooded slopes and abrupt precipices, until at length, joining the Danube, it mingled its waters with those of that ancient river.

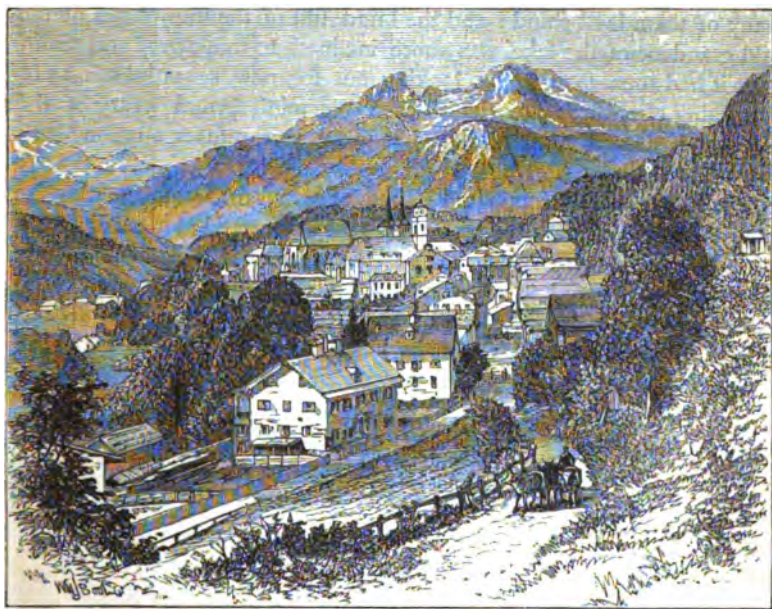
The intense, azure blue of the sky could not very easily be found in England: and the mountains caught the reflection and tinged the snow with a colour that was not of earth. Small silver threads and streams of snow here and there ran down the slopes, until, within a certain distance of the level, they melted and disappeared. Later on, the church bells rang out; the air caught up the reverberation; and amidst the surrounding beauty, the mysterious, fast-falling twilight, it required no vivid fancy to believe yourself listening to a chorus of far-off, unseen spirits, guardians of the wondrous scene.

This place gave birth to Mozart. Here he lived his first years, drinking in influences that filled his heart and mind with those unutterable melodies. A strange unison must have existed between his spirit and his home. His love of the beautiful gloried and delighted in the perfection of nature around him: the dignity of the snow-capped, everlasting hills; always there, always the same; always cold, grand, silent, stern, unbending; but lovable and soul-stirring; true and faithful. He need never doubt how he should meet them; how they would greet him. No frown or unkind word; no impatience or anger. More constant ever than man's friendship.

He was born in a large, old-fashioned house, in the most unromantic part of the town; a narrow, crowded street, shut out from all beauties. After a time his parents moved to a more open spot; and from the windows of the new home, the child could look out upon the hills and wonder: could hold commune with them in the language that no doubt was even then speaking within him. In after-life he must have cast back many a thought to this early home: have roamed in spirit, in the dark night-hours, over those wonderful mountains; down the seething torrent, its rushing sound so much music to his ears: setting all to melody, until in a wild, incomprehensible rapture he would fall asleep, and dream of a paradise and beings not of this world.

For miles round Salzburg the scenery is beyond description. A drive of three hours through mountains; wooded slopes, here and there dotted with white cottages; at intervals a small village, an inn, or a toll-bar: to your left hand a shallow, gurgling, swift-flowing river; now passing gently through pastures gorgeous with their multitude of wild flowers; now leaping down and gathering fresh force for its course: such a drive brings you to Berchtesgaden and the wonderful Königssee.

A handful of houses clustering amongst the mountains, whose snow-crowned peaks and summits towered on every side; the houses hiding amidst trees like a shy coquette; the river flowing through in a winding, capricious manner: this, and a nameless charm that must be seen and



BERCHTESGADEN.

experienced and cannot be written, made of Berchtesgaden an earthly paradise, if one there be.

Beyond lay the Königssee, one of the most notable lakes of Germany. On all sides the mountains rose so precipitously that in many places there was not space for a footpath. So deep was the lake that here and there the water was almost black as ink: and involuntarily, you shuddered as the boat cut through the dead-like quietness, where the cold mountain sides were reflected upon the surface: a feeling more subtle than any felt on a raging sea.

The dark fir-trees, growing on the mountains gave them a deep, melancholy appearance, that corresponded with the sad, green colour of

the water. Here and there, far up, standing like a fly upon a wall, was perched a goat, lost in the great stretch. A short row, and the lake opened in its extent, the snow mountains at the end rising in majesty and splendour; their dazzling whiteness contrasting with and somewhat relieving the solemn-looking firs on either side. On the left of the lake was a waterfall of rugged and romantic beauty; on the right the pilgrimage chapel of St. Bartholomew with its small cupola domes, causing a wonder as to how in the world, or why, it got there.

The drive back to Salzburg when the sun had long passed the meridian, and the heat had grown less unbearable, was in the highest degree enjoyable. Yet its beauties were less palpable than in the morning. The chief points in the scenery opened out less forcibly: many of them lay behind: and the mind full of the impression of the wild grandeur of the lake, was more inclined to think over and retain what it had seen than to be looking out for new sensations. As in everything else, there are times when the mind grows weary of the beauties of nature, and, until it has taken rest, refuses any longer to charm the senses.

The Hôtel de l' Europe was reached at last. And unfortunately for those etherealized mortals who consider that the gratified desires of the spiritual should be food sufficient for the more earthly elements of our nature, I must confess to returning in a desperate state of hunger. The excellent and luxurious cuisine had justice done to it as full and faithful as if I had not for many hours been revelling in all those beauties of creation that tend to elevate and refine mankind.



RICHARD VAN WERTER.

IT was a low, sweet voice which floated through the darkness on the quiet air, and Roy Gilbert, hearing it, roused himself from the lazy, dream-like state into which he had fallen, seated on the balcony alone with his cigar, and rose to his feet.

"Miss Van Werter," he said softly to himself, "where can she have been?" And then he went quickly down the steps and toward the shrubbery, in the direction from which the voice seemed to come.

"You look like a veritable pond-lily yourself, Miss Van Werter," he said as he joined the slender, white-robed figure coming up the garden-path in the deepening twilight. "May I ask where you have been?"

"See!" she answered, holding out her hands, laden with a fragrant burden. "I have been on the pond."

"So far! You have not been alone?"

She heard the little tremor in his voice, and answered with a low laugh, "Yes, alone. It is very pleasant, Mr. Gilbert."

"You ought not to have gone," he answered. "The boat is unsafe, unless skilfully managed. You must not do so again."

They were near the house now, and Roy Gilbert, seeing a tall figure coming rapidly towards them, stopped short.

"Here is your cousin, Miss Van Werter."

The new comer spoke quickly, almost harshly.

"Is that you, Gertrude?"

"Yes—it is I." Unconsciously there was a little tone of weariness in Gertrude Van Werter's voice; it was as though she were tired of being "hunted up" and called to account. "Did you want me, Richard?"

"You are very careless to stay out so late," he said, touching her light dress. "Your clothes are damp already."

"Don't!" she said, almost sharply, drawing away from him. "The dew cannot harm me. You will crush my lilies, Richard."

She went in—her white dress trailing behind her; her hair, slipping from its fastening, veiling her shoulders; her broad hat hanging by its ribbons from her arm; and the two men followed her.

How beautiful she looked as she stood distributing her treasures among the eager group which surrounded her. The bright light shone full upon her—on the glittering waves of her loosened hair, on her fair face, with her delicacy of form and colouring, on her slender figure wonderfully graceful in every attitude and movement, on her white dress, soiled and torn, and clinging around her in damp folds.

"Three for Miss Osgood, because she loves them. One for Captain Sergeant, because, although he doesn't care for them, he must not be slighted. Only one for you, Richard, because you scolded me. There! are you satisfied? you have them all."

"And you have none," said Roy; "are you always so generous, Miss Van Werter?"

She gave him a swift glance, but before she could speak, Dr. Van Werter interposed.

"Not another moment in that dress, Gertrude. I order dry clothing at once. I am your guardian for the present, and you must obey."

She hesitated, as though half inclined to rebel, but, meeting his authoritative gaze, flushed and turned away with evident annoyance.

"As you please," she said.

At the foot of the stairs some one touched her sleeve lightly. Turning, she saw Roy Gilbert standing close behind her.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "will you take these?" He held a little basket filled with the pure, white lilies that she loved.

"I got them myself this morning," he explained. "I thought no one cared for them as I did, and so I kept them in my room. Will you take them?"

She took the little basket with a smile. "Thank you," she said, simply; "and you?"

"I have this."

She did not blush or look conscious, as another woman might have done when he showed her the little brown bud she had given him in the drawing-room. She looked at him with a little shadow of wonderment on her face, and that was all.

"Do you really care for that?" she said, as a child might have done. "It will bloom to-morrow, and may be the finest one of all."

"I hope so," he answered: and then, as she turned, he looked at her with a pleading look on his handsome face. "To-morrow? Will you let me row you on the pond to-morrow at sunset? I know you like being there, and you may not go alone."

She hesitated a moment. "I cannot promise," she said; "Richard may not like me to go;" and then, seeing his disappointment, she looked back over her shoulder. "I'll not promise," she added, smiling this time, "but I think we can go."

The Van Werters were of Dutch extraction, but had settled in England. Richard was a clever physician: and his cousin had come to them on her mother's death: come to him and his sisters. Just now they had visitors with them.

The next evening, at sunset, Roy Gilbert sat in the boat, waiting for Gertrude. Lying lazily back with his hat over his eyes and his arms folded under his head, listening to the little plash and ripple of the water against the sides of the boat, he was doing something unusual in this generation—thinking earnestly and intently—and his thoughts were all of a white-robed woman with shining hair; that lovely girl who had looked back and smiled at him over her shoulder the night before.

It was Gertrude Van Werter's voice that roused him, and Gertrude herself stood looking down at him with a smile on her fair face.

He laughed as he rose to his feet.

"How many more are coming, Miss Van Werter?"

"None. Richard has gone into town to hospital, and I ran away from the rest."

"Thank you very much for so doing," he said as she took her seat.

"It's not quite six o'clock yet. We have two hours at least."

She looked up with a little laugh. "Not quite, Mr. Gilbert; there is to be a dance at the house to-night, you remember, and I must have time to dress. Promise me that, or I'll not go."

"I promise," he said, as she half rose; "anything you like, only stay." And she sat down again, leaning over the side of the boat and gazing into the water as they glided from the shore.

Seen by daylight, Gertrude Van Werter's face was not perfect by any means, and Roy Gilbert, watching her attentively as she sat in that listless, graceful attitude, her arms folded on the side of the boat, and her face turned slightly away from him, wondered what it was about her that had attracted him at the first, and what it was that made him feel towards her as he did. Her features were faultlessly regular, and so far lovely; but she was pale and cold-looking. It was only when she spoke that one saw her at her best—then the faint flush which came to her cheeks and her wonderful smile transfigured her completely.

"I always feel when Miss Van Werter speaks," said a young gentleman, describing her to a friend, "as Pygmalion must have felt when his statue came to life;" and that was precisely the effect she always produced.

"I can't understand it," said Roy to himself; but when she looked up and smiled at him, he did not wish to understand it: he was only content to have it so.

"How strange it is that the lilies will not stay open all the time!" she said. "They are but morning flowers. Why are you so silent, Mr. Gilbert? You scarcely have spoken to me. Are you vexed?"

"Pardon me if I have been unsociable," he answered. "I was thinking."

"Of what were you thinking? Tell me."

"I will," he answered, after a moment's pause. "I was wondering, Miss Van Werter, why it was that I love you."

A crimson tide surged over her face for a moment, dyeing it even to her bright hair; and then she turned away almost coldly. "Thank you again for your candour. Let us go back now."

"Gertrude!" Something in the voice—something in the earnest face beside her made the proud head droop, and the white eyelids veil the blue eyes. "I have never loved any woman as I love you!—you can save me or ruin me with one word. Do you care for me?"

"Don't!" she said, trying weakly to draw her hands away from his eager grasp. "What would Richard say?"

"Richard!" He turned away with that scornful repetition. "I forgot. You are engaged to him?"

"No," she answered simply. "Not engaged; but it has always been expected that I should marry him: they all seem to expect it. He will be so harsh, so angry. Oh, Roy, what shall I do?"

It was the first time she had ever called him by that name, though her cousins did frequently; and a triumphant look came into his eyes. "Gertrude, you need not answer me. I see it all. You love me."

The colour stole over her downcast face again, deeper than before. "Yes," she answered softly, "I—I am afraid it is true, Roy."

That night every one wondered at the change in Gertrude Van Werter—she seemed almost transfigured. Her usually cold and listless manner was gone. She was bright, sparkling, wonderfully fascinating.

"You almost frighten me," said Roy, as, after a bewildering waltz, they stood for a moment in a curtained recess. "You are so unreal to-night. What is it, darling? Happiness?"

"Oh, Roy," she answered, clinging to him, and looking up at him with a wonderful light in her eyes. "Will it last?"

"I hope so. Nothing can come between us now, Gertrude."

The next day at dusk, Richard Van Werter came in, a wearied, worn expression upon his stern face. Gertrude felt a sudden pity as she looked at him.

"You are tired," she said as he joined her on the terrace. "Have you been worrying over an obstinate patient, Richard?"

"No," he answered briefly. And his face darkened as he saw Roy Gilbert in the garden below, and saw the look in Gertrude's eyes as she returned his bow and smile. "I hate that man!" he said savagely. "What does he do here so much?"

Gertrude turned away indifferently. "You are out of temper, Richard," she said. "It is often so now. I will leave you to yourself."

"Stop!" he said fiercely. "I see what has happened. I cannot be mistaken. Gertrude, you have——"

"I have promised to be Roy Gilbert's wife," she answered, feeling that it must be told. "Let me go, Richard."

"You may go," he said, dropping her arm, "but will you take something from me to your promised husband?" He put a little locket in her hand. "Look at it," he said, "open it"—and she did so. Touching a spring, a sweet, girlish face smiled up at her, and on the other side, beneath a ring of soft hair which glittered like spun gold, she saw the inscription, "R. G. to Alice."

"Well?" said Richard, watching her narrowly. "Will you give it him?"

"Is it his?" The pale face looked up at him searchingly.

"It is Roy Gilbert's. The woman who sent it back to him died this morning at the hospital. A beauty she must have been once, but her pretty face was her curse. *He* gave her the locket."

"Oh, Richard!"

"Don't take it to heart, Gerty. It's only the old story! Roy Gilbert has been no worse than many another. Were you simple enough to think him perfect?"

"Yes," she answered, still speaking slowly, but very firmly, "I was."

Richard Van Werter looked after her as she walked away, a half repentant expression on his dark face. "It was right to tell her; a duty laid upon me," he muttered: "and yet I wish she had not taken it so calmly, and gone away with that queer look on her face."

That night Roy Gilbert found the locket in his room, and a note directed in Gertrude's handwriting, which he quickly opened, wondering what it could be about.

"May God forgive you, Roy Gilbert, as I do! You have taken from me all hope in life. Why did you so deceive me? At least we will meet no more. G. V. W."

Presently there arose a sudden alarm in the house. Hurrying feet were heard, frightened voices. Gertrude Van Werter had disappeared.

She had gone to her room early, pleading headache as an excuse, but Grace, going by her door, had looked in, and found it empty.

There had been a heavy shower during the evening, and the rain, drifted in by the gale, had flooded the floor. Evidently Gertrude had been a long time absent—she must have gone before the storm.

In the terrible fright, an explanation ensued between Richard and Mr. Gilbert. The latter had been misled: the man who had given the locket to the dead woman at the hospital was Raymond Gilbert the brother, not Roy.

To the pond they flew: and searched and called: at first all in vain. The clouds cleared away, the moon shone out bright and clear, and then they saw the boat under the rushes; and Gertrude's lifeless form in it. Her face was pale and cold, her long fair hair was floating around it, and a bunch of lilies was in her hand.

"Take care, Gilbert," cried Richard, too ready to give her to his rival in his deep repentance. "She has but fainted."

He was right. She had only fainted. Tenderly they got her out to bear her homewards, and the movement revived her.

"Where am I?" she murmured. "Roy?—Richard?—is it *you*?—together?"

"Yes, my darling, and you will soon hear all," whispered Roy. "Richard is good and generous, after all. He gives you to me. *All* is right. Lie your head here, and set your doubts at rest."

MY COUSIN CAROLINE'S WEDDING.

[Reprinted.]

A WAY I drove, four posters and a yellow chaise, wondering what the invitation could mean. The last visit I had made into Devonshire was volunteered on my part, and I had been quickly driven back by my aunt to musty law-papers and anticipations of briefs, because I had fallen over head and ears in love with Caroline. Caroline, in her own family was a goddess—a seraph—an angel upon earth, fit to be a queen, and sure to be a countess. Other people's opinion of her was not quite so exalted. Like many another beautiful girl—and Caroline Dashingly was beautiful—she held so preposterous a notion of the infallibility of her own charms that she had a little overplayed her cards. Her whole life and energies had been devoted to the triumph of making conquests. Fifty times might she have married, and been well settled, but that unfortunate propensity for flirtation had invariably damped the swain's ardour before the time came for popping the question. Everybody at first sight was sure to fall in love with Caroline. I, a young fellow newly fledged from Cambridge, and unused to women's society, was nearly mad after her, and would gladly have asked her to share my fortune—which was nothing a year and find myself, like many another embryo barrister—only my aunt got an inkling of the matter, and sent me and my portmanteau off together. As to Carry, she cared about as much for my own sweet self as she did for the stately old butler who was propped up every day against the sideboard. Her flirtation with me was carried on pretty strongly. She must have seen how earnest I was, and that what was sport to her might be to me—No matter, I managed to outlive it all, save the recollection. And Caroline, now one-and-thirty, was ready to catch at straws.

Well, twelve months had not elapsed since my summary ejection from Dashingly House, when I was startled by a satin-faced, musk-scented, gilt-edged envelope, from the general morning delivery. It enclosed a note from my aunt, as cordial as if I had owned all the banks in London, and were about to lay them at the feet of Caroline, conveying a pressing invitation to Dashingly there and then. So, cramming my old books and papers on to the top shelf of the cupboard, and my gown and wig into the bottom, I turned the key of it, and started.

The rail conveyed me to within six miles of Dashingly House. I bargained for a return yellow chaise-and-four, which had just conveyed an old gentleman a two-mile stage up a mountain, jumped into it, and was whirled away towards Dashingly. Who should be standing at

the lodge gates, talking to the gardener's wife, but the cherry-cheeked housemaid, my especial favourite of all the family, Caroline excepted. So I checked the postillions, and leaned from the window.

"I say, Nancy, what's up? Why am I sent for?"

"Miss Caroline's wedding, sir."

"Miss Caroline's wedding! Why—how—how long has this been about?"

"Two or three months, sir, it has been talked of. Quite a first-rate match, and such a handsome man! Captain Fitz——." The rest was lost in the roll of the chaise, the impatient postboys, or perhaps the horses, declining to wait longer.

They were dressed for dinner, and came to the drawing-room windows to stare at me in the chaise-and-four. Aunt Dashingly wore her great crimson turban and upright feathers, which, if they had been black, might have served for a hearse, and that starched-out old amber-satin gown. Caroline was in pink, with some brown ribbons bobbed oddly about her hair, and the faded partings; and my sweet sister Lina wore white muslin.

Lina was an heiress. Greatly to the indignation of we six portionless fellows, her brothers, to whom it would have been of use, our Indian uncle-in-law, Nabob Cayenne, had left her all his fortune—thirty thousand pounds. Since my mother's death, Lina had been under Aunt Dashingly's especial protection. And a very tight protection it was; nobody might dare look at her within a mile, or touch her with a long pole.

An immense sensation had been created in Devonshire, some few years previously, by Dashingly House and all its inmates "going over to Rome." This was rather in fashion at the time; and that's all that can be said about it. Caroline and her brothers "went over" too, and as many of the servants as had no mind to leave their easy places at Dashingly House. Tyro Dashingly, the elder son, had espoused a rich widow. Alfred, the younger, was away, playing the rake as usual, and Caroline pursued her conquests and her flirtations. It was quite an event when Lina came. Mrs. Dashingly's first solicitude about her was to make her and her thirty thousand pounds the property of Alfred, with as little delay as convenient; her second was to worry, lecture, and persuade Lina to abjure her heretical training, and embrace the true faith, as they had done. Against both of which propositions, Lina, undutiful girl that she was, rebelled. Two or three suitors had sought her hand, but the moment their wishes became known, her aunt had sent them off flying; just as she did me, when I presumed to fall in love with Caroline. And it was an understood thing now that anybody else, except Alfred, daring to aspire to her, would be warned away in like manner. Aunt had it all her own way until Lina should be of age, and as yet she was only nineteen.

Lina came running down the steps when I leaped out of the chaise. They had tried hard to prop her up with a little of their own form and stateliness, but it would not do. The tears stood in her large blue eyes as I kissed her cheek, fair and pure as ever. Aunt and Caroline had remained in the drawing-room; the former could not, and the latter would not have leaped down the house steps for the world. Mrs. Dashingly was very cordial; she actually gave me what she called a kiss—a slight click of the lips a foot off my face. Caroline was exceedingly gracious and dignified, in right of her exalted position as bride-elect.

"Were you surprised at my summons, Ned?" demanded Mrs. Dashingly, when I returned to the drawing-room, after shaking off some of the travelling dust.

"A little, aunt. I am not yet acquainted with the cause of it."

"You shall hear," cried my aunt, her turban standing on end with the dignity of the announcement she had in store for me, whilst Caroline's pink train rustled out like a vain peacock's. "The event of a marriage in the family, Edward, does not occur every day. I am about to part with my daughter, and I thought that the pleasure of being at the ceremony, with a week's holiday from the smoky Temple, would be very gratifying to you."

Very gratifying, indeed! When, some months ago, I had been dying for her myself: and was still, for all aunt knew.

"And so I am to congratulate Caroline upon becoming Mrs. ——"

"Captain Fitzhenry, of the 47th," bridled aunt; "of good family and immense fortune. The marriage is fixed for Tuesday next. Lina's to be bridesmaid."

"And when will it be your turn, Lina darling?" I said, bending over her; at which she blushed so very deeply that, well, I thought it could not be far off.

"There's no hurry about Lina," interrupted the old lady, shortly. "Let us get Caroline's wedding over first."

"Now, Lina, how does it all go on with you?" I inquired, drawing her into my room for an instant, when I went up to dress. "And what mean these tears?" I exclaimed, as she sat down and fairly broke into impassioned sobs. "Lina, Lina, my sister," I indignantly uttered, "I can see they have been making you wretched!"

"Yes," she said, scarcely able to speak, "ever since I came, now twelve months ago. I have been fearful—I declare to you, Edward, I have been actually fearful that my aunt would marry me to Alfred by main force: and I am sure, if we lived in less enlightened times, when such things were not unheard of, it would have been done."

"Where's Alfred now?"

"Oh, he has been away some months. He got angry and cross with me, for I held out against their plans—though my courage was nearly failing me. And my aunt wants me to change my religion; she and

Father Peter. It is her fault : I like the good old father, but he has to please Mrs. Dashingly. I wish I was poor ; she might then suffer me to get to Heaven my own way."

"But what is her motive?"

"She thinks it will cause scandal if Alfred marries a Protestant wife. And she threatens—and I am sure she will carry out her threat—that if I persist in refusing Alfred, she will shut me up in the Convent of Mercy—you know it, Edward—some ten miles from here."

"Stuff and nonsense, Lina!" I exclaimed, bursting into a laugh when the full meaning of her words came upon me; "such things are not heard of now-a-days. They have no more power to shut you up in a convent than they have me."

"My aunt has the power of appointing my residence until I am of age; if she chooses to put me in a religious house, who is to interfere with her? I don't mean, recollect, that I am to be placed in a cell or a dungeon, but as a boarder. Father Peter—he is really kind—says he will take care no harm shall come to me, and that it's very nice and pleasant there. He means well; he likes me; but he must know that convents are easier to get in at than to get out of. I am afraid of my aunt, Edward; and that's the truth."

"Lina, come hither," cried my aunt, putting in her head; "I want you. And, Ned, it is upon the stroke of the dinner hour."

"So, Carry," I whispered, leaning over her chair when I got back to the drawing-room, where she sat alone, "I thought you were to remain true to me for ever and a day!"

Caroline tried to get up a blush. She had promised the like to a few score of admirers.

"Ah! you took yourself off so suddenly, Ned. Who was going to remain faithful to a runaway lover?"

"Took myself off! I think the boot was on the other leg."

"And you never wrote, or anything," pouted Carry, attempting to turn the tables on me.

"It would have been all the same if I had, when the gallant captain made his appearance,—eh, Carry?"

"Get away, Edward!"

"He is very handsome, I suppose?"

"You can decide that point for yourself when you see him."

"A large fortune now, I understand, and a barony in prospective?"

"Just so."

"Well, cousin mine, you are a happy woman. Am I to give you away?"

"You, indeed! Alfred's coming home; partly for that, partly to make love to Lina."

"But Lina does not like him."

"Oh, I don't know. Those quiet, say-nothing girls, such as Lina

seldom know what they do like. Alfred will make her as good a husband as anybody else would. He has been extravagant lately, but he is looking for some place under government. I suppose he will get straight after a bit ; and your sister has plenty."

"What is this whisper that I hear, of a convent being Lina's alternative if she rejects him?"

"Who told you about that? Lina?"

"What if she did?"

"She need not have brought up the subject now, when the house is occupied with more agreeable matter. She will go as a boarder. Some Protestant girls are there."

"Now, Caroline, you cannot suppose that in this enlightened year of grace a young lady of nineteen years is going to be sent to a convent against her will!"

"Well, you need not tease me about it," was Carry's answer. "I believe the affair is decided. Mamma is doing it to bring her to reason about Alfred: Lina is so very obstinate. Here they come," she broke off, as Mrs. Dashingly and Lina appeared. "Don't get bothering now, Ned, about the convent! Keep peace until the wedding is over."

"And you gone, Caroline? Perhaps I may."

"Dinner, ma'am," cried the stiff old butler, appearing at the drawing-room door.

Aunt's face and her turban glowed together at these words. I knew the signs well enough—a storm was brewing. "Who told them to serve the dinner? Captain Fitzhenry is not come in."

"The captain does not dine here, ma'am. He said he had business at the railway station, and should not be back."

Aunt flounced to the dining-room, and down we sat. At least we should have sat down, but as aunt remained standing, with her eyes fixed on an opposite door, we did the same.

"Can she be waiting for Fitzhenry?" I mentally exclaimed; when the entrance of Father Peter solved the query. He often dined there. I liked the father; he was a pleasant, goodnatured man, rather jolly. He shook hands with me; and chanted a Latin grace. The footmen removed the covers, and down we sat.

Sixteen courses of fish; five of eggs, omelets, and the like; a few of butter; seven of sweets and pastry; the richest of wines; coffee and liqueurs. The repast reminded me that it was Friday.

"Edward," said my aunt, "I never permit a dish of flesh to appear at my table on these days of abstinence, whoever may be seated at it. Captain Fitzhenry has good-humouredly accommodated himself to my customs; need I request you to do the same to-day, and hold it as a fast?"

Certainly she need not. And when I thought of my usual dinner, a solitary chop and a pint of porter, and compared it with the rich board

before me, I wondered whether mine did not, of the two, better deserve the name of fast?

"These periodical fast-days, my son," cried the priest to me, "are wholesome for the soul."

"Perhaps more so than they would be for the body, holy father, if it attacked but half of the fast before us."

"Highly good," repeated the priest, "these days of mortification." And I'm sure he meant what he said, though he did laugh as he said it.

"What do you think of Captain Fitzhenry, father?"

"A docile young man; a worthy gentleman, my son. I have held frequent converse with him, and his deference to good opinions is remarkable. Reared though he has been in the tenets of an opposite creed, he is perfectly willing to listen to reason. Had we found him otherwise, I might have held it my duty to warn my good daughter here against entrusting the welfare of that lamb to his keeping."

The priest bowed to Mrs. Dashingly, and waved his finger at Caroline, lest the company present should not fully understand that they were the daughter and the lamb spoken of. It was only his way.

"A charming young man—a generous spirit!" apostrophised the priest, burying his face in a whole boatful of rich melted butter.

"Our next care must be Lina," said Mrs. Dashingly, looking daggers at my sister, who was turning crimson. "Captain Fitzhenry often remonstrates with her on her obstinacy."

"Ah," sighed the priest, as he hesitated between potted lampreys and roast salmon, "that estimable young man is three parts of a saint already. He has promised this sweet lamb that when she is his wife, she shall endow a chapel."

"A generous fellow, this bridegroom-elect of yours, Carry," I whispered.

A flashing, beaming, triumphant glance shot from her eyes towards me, as she looked up from her plate. She was quite sensible of the advantages to be derived from a rich and submissive husband.

I was anything but anxious to see him. He was already sketched, drawn, coloured, and hung up in my mind's eye—a harmless milksop of a baby of twenty, who dared not say his soul was his own, and whose head had been constructed to carry as few brains as possible. Who else would be taken (in) by a *passée* flirt like Caroline? Somehow, since aunt had so kindly helped to cure my own infatuation, I had grown wonderfully alive to the real worth and attractions of my fair cousin.

Father Peter took leave after dinner, and I went with the ladies to the drawing-room. There, leaning over the back of Carry's chair, I made violent love to her, by way of passing the time. She was relapsing into her old coquettish ways ere I had been there ten minutes—on my

honour she was—and we were on the point of as hot a flirtation as ever, when the room door suddenly opened, and the butler put in his head.

“Captain Fitzhenry.”

I started back with astonishment, and trod upon aunt's pet cat. After spitting and snarling, it made at last a spring at the startled servant. For instead of the monkey I had pictured, in walked a splendid man of six or seven-and-twenty, handsome enough to have had his portrait propped up at the “National,” or his bust in a group of far-famed sculpture; with a frank, beaming eye, and a tongue that might have turned half the girls' heads in Christendom. How on earth had Caroline beguiled *him*?

I might have waited for the sun to form a conjunction with itself, or a brief to come to me, before alighting on a more agreeable fellow. A really well-informed, companionable man, keen and sensible. We became cordial friends at once, and I lost myself in a puzzled reverie. That he should have chosen Caroline for a wife did not surprise me; for if men and women were shaken up in a bag, and drawn out of it in couples, more incongruous matches would not be met with than are met with now; but—his docility to aunt and the new religion!

My aunt was in high goodhumour, and proposed that we four should have a quadrille, offering to try her hand at some bygone tune; so down she sat to the piano. But how were we to stand up? Captain Fitzhenry, of course, advanced to his bride-elect; but it would never do for brother and sister to dance together. So the captain took Lina, and I crossed over to Caroline.

He danced very well; as did Lina. They looked a handsome couple, and so well suited to each other that I caught myself wondering, perhaps regretting, that she was not his chosen one. I hoped I was mistaken—indeed, I knew I was—but it did strike me that if ever bright blue eyes beamed love, Lina's did when she glanced at his.

Before we had finished the four-legged quadrille—people say four handed cribbage and four-handed whist, so why not four-legged quadrille?—Dr. Cram, the rector, came in. The Dashinglys had not renounced old friends with their new religion. A fine specimen of a good old English parson was Dr. Cram; the very quintessence of moderation and humility; held only five livings, and was not paid a farthing more than three thousand a year for the lot. For that was the age of pluralities. A pleasant, hospitable man, with a rubicund face and a round-about form, quite a second Daniel Lambert; never troubling his head about any earthly care, save what he should eat and drink; interfering with nobody; letting his flock go whatever road they chose, and preaching about five sermons in the year—one at each place. People insinuated at the time that had he been a little less supine, Dashingly House might not have taken refuge in Rome. He was to have the honour of officiating at Caroline's wedding; so

far as the Protestant ceremony went; and Mrs. Dr. Cram—as the aristocracy called her down there—was going to church in a bird-of-paradise feather. The doctor let this piece of news out to us in the openness of his heart. He was come in to gossip about the marriage; and we discussed the programme of the ceremony.

“Have you got the licence yet?” asked the doctor.

“No,” said Fitzhenry; “it’s coming.”

“Special?” resumed Dr. Cram.

“Of course.”

The rector’s carriage was to lead the van, containing himself and Fitzhenry; the bridegroom’s new travelling-chariot was to follow, with Alfred and Mrs. Cram; the Dashingly coach would go next, the bride, bridesmaid, aunt, and Sir Popperton Jeffs, the family uncle, inside; and a string of several more would follow, conveying the general company. Immediately after the church-service, the necessary Catholic rites would be performed.

Monday came, the day previous to the wedding, and Mr. Alfred Dashingly made his appearance in the morning. Foppish, and overdressed as usual, he presented a striking contrast to Fitzhenry. Should Lina ever get worried into marrying him, thought I to myself, she is not the girl of sense I take her for.

Alfred was in raptures with his brother-in-law-to-be; but so he would have been with any rich man who walked off Caroline, were it only from the hope that he should succeed in doing a little with him in the borrowing line. He was especially affectionate to Lina—wanted to favour her with a chaste salute on his arrival—whether as a cousin or a lover he did not intimate—but Lina, with a dignified air and a haughty gesture, drew away from the proffered honour.

“How can you make up your mind to leave your childhood’s home, Carry, and the green fields where you have gambolled?” asked I, putting on a dash of the sentimental.

“A great sacrifice, is it not,” bantered Caroline, “to quit this out-of-the-world place, where one is never certain of seeing a soul but the father and old Cram, for a seat in Wiltshire and a mansion in town?”

“Do you intend to take pity on any of the poor devils you are leaving behind to broken hearts, and invite us to visit you?”

“I—I shall see,” pouted the beauty. “I can make no promises, for the captain’s connections are high, so I must be particular. Perhaps I shall invite Lina. That is, if she decides to marry Alfred.”

“A genteel hint that I am to be left out, cousin mine. If I meet you in town, I must not presume to raise my hat in the distance?”

“You are always talking nonsense, Edward,” answered Carry, as she moved away.

“What’s that?” cried Fitzhenry, coming up to me.

"Only a rap for my presumption in asking if a briefless wight might venture to show himself at the house of Mrs. Fitzhenry."

"And Caroline says 'No,'" he rejoined, laughing.

"Caroline intimates as much. It was only asked in jest, Fitzhenry."

"Then I tell you what, Ned, my boy," he exclaimed, shaking my hands in his usual impetuous, pleasant manner; "I'll take upon myself to give you an invitation beforehand, and a cordial one, too. No one shall be made more welcome than you, if you will only come to us—and the sooner the better."

"And your wife?—allowing I took you at your word?"

"I hope and believe that my wife will start few difficulties of this nature when once she is mine."

"Fitzhenry, you are a favourite with Mrs. Dashingly and with the old priest. And possess, I believe, influence over them."

"They over me, you mean."

"I wish you could persuade them to see the folly of this scheme of theirs, the placing Lina in a convent. The very idea is ridiculous. Her education is finished. If they could be induced to settle the matter amicably, it would be much more desirable, especially for Lina, than our being obliged to come to a blow-up. Will you exert your influence on her behalf?"

"No, Ned," he continued, after a pause of deliberation; "to remonstrate about it is clearly what I have no right to do. As to Father Peter, I don't think he has interfered much in it: it's Mrs. Dashingly. You will allow me to express a hope, that whatever steps may be taken with regard to your sister, they may be the means of securing her happiness."

"I had deemed her a favourite of yours, Fitzhenry."

"She is so—as being nearly connected with my future wife."

Did anybody ever happen to be in a house the day before a wedding? If so, they have *been* in it—that's all. Cutting up wedding-cake; tying and sealing up cards; burning old billets-doux of other suitors, and laughing over their locks of hair; trying on bonnets; twisting up wreaths; making up favours; packing trunks; writing letters for the morrow's post, announcing the happy event which will then have taken place; cooking dishes for the breakfast, till the house smells like all the restaurants of the late Palais Royal condensed into one; ejaculating notes of admiration at the arriving presents; overwhelming the servants with a confused mass of directions, who in return are running into every corner but where they ought to run!

Caroline wrote lots of letters, glad enough to be able to do so at last—she had waited for it for years. Her friends were numerous; and all were favoured with an epistle, conveying the glad tidings.

Carry was far from being jealous, that's certain, or she would not have liked the whispered conversation between Fitzhenry and Lina, all the time she wrote, or that duet in the other room. It was nothing to me:

but, upon my word, the captain's stolen intercourse with Lina looked a vast deal more like love than his paraded attentions to Caroline. My private opinion was that he had scented his bride's flirting propensities, and was playing off a bit of revenge. However, the morrow must end it. I'll be shot, too, if he did not kiss her! To be sure, he kissed Caroline at the same time, and said something about he and Lina being only a few hours off cousinship; but I know this, that if Lina had been my ladye-love instead of my sister, I should have found my rest disturbed by visions of coffee and pistols.

It was a beautiful day for a wedding. The sun shone, the bells tinkled, and the carriages rattled up with the guests. The first arrival was Dr. Cram and his lady, the latter's bird-of-paradise nodding to the wind as she alighted, all splendid in a robe of pea-green bugles and gold wire. Sir Pepperton Jeffs dashed up with outriders. He bore a splendid case of pearls as a present for the bride, and a similar set for Lina. Mrs. Dr. Cram, who liked to have a finger in everybody's pie, told him it was not etiquette to bestow upon the bridesmaid a like present to the bride's. But Sir Popperton, who was a fiery man, observed that Lina was his niece as well as Caroline, and that etiquette might be smothered.

Everybody was in high feather; aunt herself like the rising sun. A splendid scarlet dress, dazzling to behold, and a white bonnet and scarlet plume. Captain Fitzhenry looked very handsome—strange that he had not chosen a bride more worthy of him! Coffee and tea were handed round, but *the* breakfast was to come afterwards.

We were to set out for the church at ten, but that hour struck before Caroline made her appearance. Dr. Cram had twice looked at his watch, when a rush of white satin and lace proclaimed the bride's presence. Several damsels were in her train, but next to her, as chief bridesmaid, walked my gentle sister. The room fell into congratulations, and Carry's gratified eye told that they were welcome. I never saw her look so well. Her dress, exclusive of jewels, must have cost what would keep me for six months. Lina was in a quiet, pale sort of silk, that I unfortunately called "stone;" upon which Mrs. Dr. Cram indignantly snapped me up, and asserted that it was "pearl grey." Her bonnet was the same as Caroline's, except the orange-blossoms, and she wore no jewels. The whole of Caroline's dress had been Lina's present.

Captain Fitzhenry advanced, and did homage to his bride in a whisper. She received it with a genuine look of timidity, and turned away to shelter her blushes behind aunt's fiery petticoats. The captain then spoke to Lina in the same low tone, when she burst into tears, and nearly sobbed herself into hysterics. Thinking she was going into them out and out, I got some Preston salts ready, and called out for a can of water. I did not care for the hysterics, but I did care for

Lina, and felt a dreadful suspicion of her misplaced passion for Fitzhenry.

"Never you mind, dear," said Mrs. Dr. Cram, patting Lina on the shoulder; "it shall be your wedding next. Sha'n't it, Mr. Alfred?"

With great parade we sailed down to the equipages. But, elaborately as the procession was planned beforehand, the programme, amidst the bustle and excitement, was not strictly followed out. It often is not.

The first mishap was with Fitzhenry's carriage. The coachmen had received orders to place but a pair of horses to each carriage for church, and his appeared with four; but it was too late to remedy it now. The second blunder consisted in my aunt's being bowed by Dr. Cram into his chariot, instead of Fitzhenry, and off they started. Fitzhenry stepped into his own, and there, behold! some bungler had planted Lina. So they went next. Then followed the bride, with Sir Popperton, Alfred, and Mrs. Dr. Cram, the bird-of-paradise's tail tipping out at the window to gladden the admiring spectators; and the rest of us followed anyhow, just where we could scramble.

Caroline was at the altar. The Reverend Doctor, in full canonicals, faced her, book in hand, and we were all on the tiptoe of expectation to hear the first word of the service. But there seemed a strange delay I was standing quite behind, and could see nothing but the bird-of-paradise and the top of my aunt's scarlet plume.

"What's he waiting for?" whispered I to Uncle Popperton, pulling him behind, and nodding towards old Cram.

"What the deuce, boy!—would you marry her to herself? The captain is not come yet."

"Why, his carriage went second—next to the parson's. Lina was in it. Is she not here?"

"Can't you see she's not?" grumbled Sir Popperton. "It is plain enough."

I dare say it was plain enough to him, who was six feet two in stockings; but I counted five feet nothing in boots.

My aunt beckoned me forward. "Edward," she whispered, "go to the door and see. There is some dreadful accident, I fear; he always would drive such spirited horses."

"But he came next to you, aunt—before the rest of us. If there had been any accident, we must have seen it."

"Those fools of postillions of his have driven to the Catholic chapel then," answered aunt, in a fever. "Do go and see."

I made my way in haste to the Catholic chapel. Father Peter was there, waiting for the wedding, and no doubt thinking of the feast that was to follow it. He was to sit at my aunt's right hand. But I could see no trace of Fitzhenry. The Cram footman stepped up to me as I was going back.

"Beg pardon, sir," he said, touching his hat, "but the captain's carriage went this way—don't think it's of any use looking for it that."

"Which way?"

"Right down along the left road, sir, without turning to the church at all. The postboys were lashing their horses like mad, and the carriage tore along and whirled off at the finger-post, which leads to nothing but the railway-station."

"Was the captain in it?"

"The captain was in it, sir, and Miss Lina with him. His own man sat in the rumble."

"What the devil!" growled the choleric Sir Popperton, when I returned to report, "are we to cool our heels in this church all day?"

"The breakfast!" stammered Dr. Cram, his nose turning to a light purple, as the fear gained ground that some untoward accident might put a stop to the banquet.

"Those dreadful horses have run away with him, and he will never come back but with his head torn off," shrieked Carry, going into an angry faint upon the altar steps.

"Dear Mrs. Dashingly," groaned Dr. Cram, "don't you think a little refreshment would revive her?—the breakfast—or so? She may have a fit of illness if she fasts longer."

It being obvious that a dwelling-house was a more convenient place than a church to wait in, while a man was brought home without his head, we returned to the carriages to be conveyed back again. Father Peter joined us as we entered the house, and Sir Popperton's out-riders were despatched flying, in search of the runaway chariot.

"There, he'll soon be heard of now, my dear," cried Dr. Cram to Caroline, his spirits going up at his proximity to the collation.

Fitzhenry was heard of, and Lina also.

May a certain gentleman fly away with me, if ever I saw such a house in my life, before or since. My aunt danced a hornpipe with passion, and poor Caroline, in her wild dismay, tore her orange-blossoms to pieces.

It appeared—for, bit by bit, the whole plot and counter-plot was laid bare—that Fitzhenry had, in the first instance, proposed to Mrs. Dashingly for Lina. But the lady, with indignant firmness, informed him that he might just as well ask for *her*, or—say—for the whole convent of nuns; and that there was just as much probability of his obtaining them, as there was of his obtaining Lina. That the latter was promised to Alfred, and in the event of that project failing, she was to be "dedicated." The communication was obligingly accompanied by a hint that if ever Captain Fitzhenry gave another thought towards Lina, he must bid farewell to Dashingly House. The captain bowed to the decision, apparently acquiescing in it, and continued his friendship with Dashingly. Caroline made a dead

set at him, as Lina was put out of the question. And—well—perhaps it was not quite right to pretend to fall desperately in love with her, but he declared that it was the only way he could devise to have access to the society of Lina. His attentions to Caroline were eagerly caught up by her and Mrs. Dashingly, and the preparations were hurried on, almost before a syllable had been spoken on his part. And now he had taken Lina off to the railway-station, where a special train was waiting, the engine at a white heat, to convey them towards Scotland. He left a polite note behind him, hoping Mrs Dashingly would forgive him for making Lina his wife, with his compliments to the convent, and a kind word to Father Peter.

"The—the—the *thirty thousand pounds*!" gasped Alfred, his lips all white, and his hair standing on end, "does she take THAT?"

Lina did *not* take the thirty thousand pounds. If she married without consent before she became of age, only ten of it remained to her. The other twenty came plump to us six boys.

Somebody set up an unearthly shriek, and began whirling about the room in a violent manner. It was a repetition of poor aunt's hornpipe.

"The breakfast!" reiterated Dr. Cram, with tears in his eyes. "Isn't it to be eaten now?"

"Of course it is to be eaten," answered Sir Popperton, hardly able to speak for laughing. "I'll preside, if Mrs. Dashingly won't. God bless Lina! She will do more good in the sphere she has had the courage to choose, than she would have done shut up in a convent—I beg your pardon, holy sir," with a nod to the priest, "I mean no offence. You may rely upon one thing, Mrs. Dashingly, that even if Fitzhenry had not stepped in, you should never have shut up Lina."

The priest bowed and smiled courteously. He was not half a bad old fellow, after all.

So we men filed in to breakfast. And Mrs. Dr. Cram, who saw no fun in our having it to ourselves, took the lead in following us.

Another mistake came to light. All Caroline's letters, announcing the happy event to her friends, had been posted the previous night through the officiousness of the old butler. Carry was beside herself. In her mortification she would have married me; want of briefs looked a trifling matter to her now, compared with remaining Miss Caroline Dashingly. I wished she might get it.

And so ended poor Caroline's wedding.

Alfred talked largely about calling the captain to account: but it came to nothing. Sir Popperton's opinion was strongly expressed, and as *he* had thirty thousand pounds to leave to somebody, Alfred dutifully deferred to him. For myself, I had the supreme felicity, a fortnight afterwards, of giving away my sweet sister Lina to Captain Fitzhenry, at St. George's Church, the two having some slight scruples about the legality of the previous marriage in Scotland.



M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

EDMUND EVANS.

"It was a scene to be remembered in after years."

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THE ARGOSY.

FEBRUARY 1, 1873.

THE MASTER OF GREYLANDS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER IV.

FORESHADOWINGS OF EVIL.

THE stone walls of Greylands' Rest lay cold and still under the pale sunshine of the February day. The air was sharp and frosty ; the sun, though bright to the eye, had little warmth in it ; and the same cutting east wind that John Bent had complained of to the traveller, who had alighted at his house the previous afternoon, was prevailing still with an equal keenness.

Mr. Castlemaine felt it in his study, where he had been busy all the morning. He fancied he must have caught a chill, for a slight shiver suddenly stirred his tall, fine frame, and he turned to the fire and gave it a vigorous poke. The fuel was wood and coal mixed, and the blaze went roaring up the chimney. The room was not large. Standing with his back to the fire, the window was on his right hand ; the door on his left ; opposite to him, against the wall, stood a massive piece of mahogany furniture, called a bureau. It was a kind of closed-in desk, made somewhat in the fashion of the banker's desk at Stilborough, but larger ; the inside had pigeon-holes and deep drawers, and a slab for writing on. This inside was well filled with neatly arranged bundles of papers, with account-books belonging to the farm business and else, and with some few old letters : and the Master of Greylands was cautious to keep this desk closed and locked from the possibility of the view of those about him. The Castlemaines were proud, reticent, and careful men.

For a good part of the morning, Mr. Castlemaine had been seated at this desk. He had shut and locked it now, and was standing with his back to the fire, deep in thought. Two letters, of the large size in

vogue before envelopes were used, and sealed with the Castlemaine crest in red wax, lay on the side-table door, ready to be posted. His left hand was inside his waistcoat, resting on the broad pleated shirt-frill of fine cambric; his bright dark eyes had rather a troubled look in them as they sought that old building over the fields opposite, the Friar's Keep, and the sparkling sea beyond. In reality, Mr. Castlemaine was looking neither at the Friar's Keep nor the sea, for he was deep in thought, and saw nothing.

The Master of Greylands was of a superstitious nature: it may as well be stated candidly: difficult though it was to believe such of so practical a man. Not to the extent of giving credit to stories of ghosts and apparitions; the probability is that in his heart he would have laughed at that; but he did believe in signs and warnings, in omens of ill-luck and good luck.

On this self-same morning he had awoke with an impression of discomfort, as if some impending evil were hanging over him; he could not account for it, for there was no conducting cause; and at the time he did not connect it with any superstitious feeling or fancy, but thought he must be either out of sorts, or had had something to annoy him that he did not at the moment recollect. Three or four little hindrances, or mishaps, occurred when he was dressing. First of all, he could not find his slippers: he hunted here; he looked there; and then remembered that he had left them the previous night in his study—a most unusual thing for him to do—and he had to go and fetch them, or else dress in his stockings. Next, in putting on a clean shirt, he tore the button-hole at the neck, and was obliged to change it for another one. And the last thing he did was to upset all his shaving-water, and had to wait while fresh was brought. "Nothing but hindrances: it seems as though I were not to get dressed to-day," muttered the Master of Greylands. "Can the day have any ill-luck in store for me?"

The intelligent reader will doubtless be much surprised to hear him ask so ridiculous a question. Nevertheless, the same kind of thing had occurred twice before in Mr. Castlemaine's life, and each time a great evil had followed. Not of the present time was he thinking, now as he stood, but of one of those past days, and of what it had brought forth.

"Poor Maria!" he softly cried—alluding to his first wife, of whom he had been passionately fond. "Well, and merry, and loving in the morning; and at night stretched before me in death. It was an awful accident! and I—I have never cared quite so much for the world since. Maria was—what is it? Come in."

A knock at the door had disturbed the reflections. Mr. Castlemaine let fall his coat tails, which he had then caught up, and turned his head to it. A man-servant appeared.

"Commodore Teague wants to know, sir, whether he may move them two or three barrow-loads of wood to the Hutt to-day. He'd like to, he says, if it's convenient."

"Yes, he can take them. Is he here, Miles?"

"Yes, sir; he's waiting in the yard."

"I'll come and speak to him."

And the Master of Greylands, taking the two letters from the side-table, left the room to descend, shutting the door behind him.

We must turn for a few minutes to the Dolphin Inn, and to the previous evening. Nothing could well have exceeded John Bent's consternation when his guest, the unknown stranger, had revealed his name. Anthony Castlemaine! Not quite at first, but after a short interval, the landlord saw how it must be—that he was the son of the late Basil Castlemaine. And he was not at all best pleased to hear it in the moment's annoyance.

"You ought to have told me before, sir," he stammered in his confusion. "It was unkind to take me at a disadvantage. Here have I been using liberties with the family's name, supposing I was talking to an utter stranger!"

The frank expression of the young man's face, the pleasant look in his fine brown eyes, tended to reassure the landlord, even better than words.

"You have not said a syllable of my family that I could take exception to," he freely said. "You knew my father: will you shake hands with me, John Bent, as his son?"

"You are too good, sir; and I meant no harm by my gossip," said the landlord, meeting the offered hand. "You must be the son of Mr. Basil. It's a great many years since he went away, and I was but a lad, but I remember him. Your face is nearly the same as his was, sir. The likeness was puzzling me beyond everything. I hope Mr. Basil is well, sir."

"No," said the young man, "he is dead. And I have come over here as his son and heir, to claim Greylands' Rest."

It was even so. The facts were as young Anthony Castlemaine stated. And a short summary of past events must be given here.

When Basil Castlemaine went abroad so many years ago, in his hot-blooded youth, he spent some of the first years roaming about in what he called seeing the world. Later, circumstances brought him acquainted with a young English lady, whose friends lived in France in the province of Dauphiné: which, as the world knows, is close on the borders of Italy. They had settled near a place called Gap, and were in commerce there, owning some extensive silk-mills. Basil Castlemaine, tired, probably, of his wandering life and of being a beau garçon married this young lady, put all the money he had left (it was a very tolerably good sum) into the silk-mills, and became a partner.

There he had remained. He liked the climate ; he liked the French mode of life ; he liked the business he had engaged in. Not once had he revisited England. He was by nature a most obstinate man, retaining anger for ever, and he would not give token of remembrance to the father and brothers who, in his opinion, had been too glad to get rid of him. No doubt they had. But, though he did not allow them to hear of him, he heard occasionally of them. An old acquaintance of his, who was the son of one Squire Dobie, living some few miles on the other side Stilborough, wrote to him every two years, or so, and gave him news. But this correspondence (if letters written only on one side could be called such, for all George Dobie ever received back was a newspaper, sent in token that his letter had reached its destination) was carried on *en cachette* ; and George Dobie never disclosed it to living mortal, having undertaken not to do so. Some two years before the present period, George Dobie had died : his letters of course ceased, and it was by the merest accident that Basil Castlemaine heard of the death of his father. He was then himself too ill to return and put in his claim to Greylands' Rest ; in fact, he was near to death ; but he charged his son to go to England and claim the estate as soon as he should be no more ; nay, as he said, to enter into possession of it. But he made use of a peculiar warning in giving this charge to his son ; and these were the words :

"Take you care what you are about, Anthony, and go to work cautiously. There may be treachery in store for you. The brothers—your uncles—who combined to drive me away from our homestead in days gone by, may combine again to keep you out of it. Take care of yourself, I say ; feel your way, as it were ; and beware of treachery."

Whether, as is supposed sometimes to be the case, the dying man had some prevision of the future, and saw, as by instinct, what it would bring forth, certain it was, that he made use of this warning to young Anthony : and equally certain that the end bore out the necessity for the caution.

So here was Anthony Castlemaine. Arrived in the land of his family to put in his claim to what he deemed was his lawful inheritance, Greylands' Rest, the deep black band worn for his father yet fresh upon his hat.

Mrs. Castlemaine sat in the red parlour, reading a letter. Or, rather re-reading it, for it was one that had arrived earlier in the morning. A lady at Stilborough had applied for the vacant place of governess to Miss Flora Castlemaine, and had enclosed her testimonials.

"Good music, singing, drawing ; no French," read Mrs. Castlemaine aloud, partly for the benefit of Miss Flora, who stood by on a stool, not at all pleased that any such application should come ; for, as we have already seen, the young lady would prefer to bring herself

up without the aid of any governess. "Good-tempered, but an excellent disciplinarian, and very firm with her pupils——"

"I'm not going to have *her*, mamma," came the interruption. "Don't you think it!"

"I do not suppose you will have her, Flora. The want of French will be an insuperable objection. How tiresome it is! One seems unable to get everything. The last one who applied was not a sufficient musician for advanced pupils; and therefore could not have undertaken Ethel's music."

"As if Ethel needed to learn music still! Why, she plays as well—as well," concluded the girl, at a loss for any simile. "Catch me learning music when I'm as old as Ethel!"

"I consider it nonsense myself. But Ethel wishes it, and your papa so foolishly gives in to her whims in all things, that of course she has to be studied in the matter as much as you. It may be months and months before we get a lady who combines all that's wanted *here*."

Mrs. Castlemaine spoke resentfully. What with one thing and another, she generally was in a state of resentment against Ethel.

"I hope it may be years and years," cried Flora, leaning her arms on the table and kicking her legs about. "I hope we shall never get one at all."

"It would be easy enough to get one, but for this trouble about Ethel's music," grumbled Mrs. Castlemaine. "I have a great mind to send her to the Grey Nunnery for her lessons. Sister Charlotte, I know, is perfect on the piano; and she would be thankful for the employment."

"Papa would not let her go to the Nunnery," said the sharp girl. "He does not like the Grey Ladies."

"I suppose he'd not. I'm sure, what with this disqualification and that disqualification, a good governess is as difficult to fix upon as—— Get off the table, my sweet child," hastily broke off Mrs. Castlemaine: "here's your papa."

The Master of Greylands entered the red parlour, after his short interview in the yard with Commodore Teague. Miss Flora slipped past him, and disappeared. He saw a good deal to find fault with in her rude, tomboy ways; and she avoided him when she could. Taking the poker, he stirred the fire into a blaze, just as he had, not many minutes before, stirred his own fire upstairs.

"It is a biting cold day," he observed. "I think I must have caught a little chill, for I seem to feel cold in an unusual degree. What's that?"

Mrs. Castlemaine held the letters still in her hand; and by the expression of her countenance, bent upon the contents, he could perceive there was some annoyance.

"*This* governess does not do: it is as bad as the last. She lacked music; this one lacks French. Is it not provoking, James?"

Mr. Castlemaine took up the letters, and read them. "I should say she is just the sort of person for Flora," he observed. "The testimonials are excellent."

"But her want of French! Did you not observe that?"

"I don't know that French is of so much consequence for Flora as the getting a suitable person to control her. One who will hold her under firm discipline. As it is, she is being ruined."

"French not of consequence for Flora!" repeated Mrs. Castlemaine. "What can you mean, James?"

"I said it was not of so much consequence, relatively speaking. Neither is it."

"And while Ethel's French is perfect!"

"What has that to do with it?"

"I will never submit to see Flora inferior in accomplishments to Ethel, James. French I hold especially by. Better, of the two, for her to fail in music than in speaking French. If it were not for Ethel's senseless whim of continuing to take music lessons, there would be no trouble."

"Who's this, I wonder?" cried Mr. Castlemaine. He alluded to a visitor's ring at the hall bell. Flora came dashing in.

"It's a gentleman in a fur coat," she said. "I saw him come up the walk."

"A gentleman in a fur coat!" repeated her mother. "Some one who has walked from Stilborough this cold day, I suppose."

Miles entered. On his small silver waiter lay a card. He presented it to his master, and spoke: "The gentleman says he wishes to see you, sir. I have shown him into the drawing-room."

The Master of Greylands was gazing at the card with knitted brow and haughty lips. He did not understand the name on it.

"What farce is this?" he exclaimed, tossing the card on the table in anger. And Mrs. Castlemaine bent to read it with aroused curiosity.

"Anthony Castlemaine."

"It must be an old card of your father's, James," she remarked. "Given, perhaps years ago, to some one to send in, should he ever require to present himself here—perhaps to crave a favour."

This view, just at the moment it was spoken, seemed feasible enough to Mr. Castlemaine, and his brow lost its fierceness. Another minute, and he saw how untenable it was.

"My father never had such a card as this, Sophia. Plain 'Anthony Castlemaine,' without hold or handle. His cards had 'Mr.' before the name. And look at the strokes and flourishes! What sort of a person is it, Miles?"

"A youngish sort of gentleman, sir. He has a lot of dark fur on his coat. He asked for Mr. James Castlemaine."

"Mr. *James Castlemaine!*" imperiously echoed the Master of Greylands, as he stalked from the room, card in hand.

The visitor was standing before a portrait in the drawing-room, contemplating it earnestly. It was that of old Anthony Castlemaine, taken when he was about fifty years of age. At the opening of the door he turned round and advanced, his hand extended and a pleasant smile on his face.

"I have the gratification, I fancy, of seeing my Uncle James!"

Mr. Castlemaine kept his hands to himself. He looked haughtily at the intruder; he spoke frigidly.

"I have not the honour of your acquaintance, sir."

"But my card tells you who I am," rejoined the young man. "I am indeed your nephew, uncle; the son of your elder brother. He was Basil, and you are James."

"Pardon me, sir, if I tell you what *I* think you are. An impostor."

"Ah no, do not be afraid, uncle. I am verily your nephew, Anthony Castlemaine. I have papers and legal documents with me to prove indisputably the fact; I bring you also a letter from my father, written on his death-bed. But I should have thought you might know me by my likeness to my father; and he—I could fancy that portrait had been taken for him"—pointing to the one he had been looking at. "He always said I greatly resembled my grandfather."

There could be no dispute as to the likeness. The young man's face was the Castlemaine face exactly: the well formed, handsome features, the clear and fresh complexion, the brilliant dark eyes. All the Castlemaines had been alike, and this one was like them all; even like James, who stood there.

Taking a letter from his pocket-book, he handed it to Mr. Castlemaine. The latter broke the seal—Basil's own seal; he saw that—and began to peruse it. While he did so, he reflected a little, and made up his mind.

To acknowledge his nephew. For he had the sense to see that no other resource would be left him. He did it with a tolerably good grace, but in a reserved, cold kind of manner. Folding up the letter, he asked a few questions; which young Anthony freely answered, and gave a brief account of the past.

"And Basil—your father—is dead, you say! Has been dead four weeks. This letter, I see, is dated Christmas Day."

"It was on Christmas Day he wrote it, uncle. Yes, nearly four weeks have elapsed since his death: it took place on the fourteenth of January; his wife, my dear mother, had died on the same day six years before. It was curious, was it not? I had meant to come over here immediately, as he charged me to do; but there were many matters of business to be settled, and I could not get away until now."

"Have you come over for any particular purpose?" coldly asked Mr. Castlemaine.

"I have come to stay, Uncle James. To take possession of my inheritance."

"Of your inheritance?"

"The estate of Greylands' Rest."

"Greylands' Rest is not yours," said Mr. Castlemaine.

"My father informed me that it was. He brought me up to no profession: he always said that Greylands' Rest would be mine at his own death; that he should come into it himself at the death of his father, and thence it would descend to me. And, as I have mentioned to you, we did not hear my grandfather was dead until close upon last Christmas. Had my father known it in the summer, he would have come over to put in his claim: he was in sufficiently good health then."

"It is a pity you should have come so far on a fruitless errand, young man. Listen. When your father, Basil, abandoned his home here in his youth, he forfeited all claim to the inheritance. He asked for his portion, and had it; he took it away with him and *stayed away*; stayed away for nigh upon forty years. What claim does he suppose that sort of conduct gave him on my father's affection, that he should leave to him Greylands' Rest."

"He always said his father would leave it to no one but him: that he knew it, and was sure of it."

"What my father might have done had Basil come back during his lifetime, I cannot pretend to say: neither is it of any consequence to conjecture now. Basil did not come back: and, therefore, you cannot be surprised that he missed Greylands' Rest; that the old father left it to his second son—myself—instead of to him."

"But did he leave it to you, uncle?"

"A superfluous question, young man. I succeeded to it, and am here in possession of it."

"I am told that there are doubts upon the point abroad," returned Anthony, speaking in the same pleasant tone, but with straightforward candour.

"Doubts upon what point?" haughtily demanded Mr. Castlemaine.

"What I hear is this, Uncle James. That it is not known abroad, and never has been known, how you came into Greylands' Rest. Whether the estate was left to you by will, or handed over to you by deed of gift, or given to you *in trust* to hold for my father. Nobody knows, I am told, anything about it, or even whether there was or was not a will. Perhaps you will give me these particulars, uncle?"

Mr. Castlemaine's face grew dark as night. "Do you presume to doubt my word, young man? I tell you that Greylands' Rest is mine. Let it content you."

"If you will show me that Greylands' Rest is yours, Uncle James,

I will never say another word upon the subject, or give you the smallest trouble. Prove this to me, and I will stay a few days in the neighbourhood, for the sake of cementing family ties—though I may never meet any of you again—and then go back to the place whence I came. But if you do not give me this proof, I must prosecute my claim, and maintain my rights."

"Rights!" sneered Mr. Castlemaine, beginning to lose his temper. "How dare you presume to talk to *me* in this way? A needy adventurer—for that is what I believe you are, left without means of your own—to come here, and——"

"I beg your pardon," interrupted the young man; "I am not needy. Though far from rich, I have a competency. Enough to keep me."

"It is all one to me," said Mr. Castlemaine. "You had better do as you say—go back to the place whence you came."

"If the estate be truly and lawfully yours, I should be the last to attempt to disturb you in it; I should not wish to do it. But if it be not yours, Uncle James, it must be mine; and until I can be assured one way or the other, I shall remain here, though it be for ever."

Mr. Castlemaine drew himself up to his full height. He was perfectly calm again; perhaps somewhat vexed that he had allowed himself to betray temper; and rejoined, coolly and prudently:

"I cannot pretend to control your movements; to say you shall go, or you shall come; but I tell you, frankly, that your staying will not serve you in the least. Were you to remain for ever—as you phrase it—not one tittle of proof would you get from me. Things have come to a pretty pass, if I am to be bearded in my own house, and have my word doubted."

"Well, Uncle James," said the young man, still speaking pleasantly, "then nothing remains for me but to try and find out the truth for myself. I wish you had been more explicit with me, for I am sure I do not know how to set about it," he added, candidly.

A faint, proud smile curled Mr. Castlemaine's decisive lips. It seemed to say, "Do what you please; it is beneath my notice." His nephew took up his hat to depart.

"May I offer to shake hands with you, Uncle James? I hope we need not be enemies?"

A moment's hesitation, and Mr. Castlemaine shook the offered hand. It was next to impossible to resist the frank geniality; just the same frank geniality that had characterised Basil; and Mr. Castlemaine thawed a little.

"It appears to be a very strange thing that Basil should have remained stationary all those years in France; never once to have come home!"

"I have heard him say many a time, Uncle James, that he should never return until he returned to take possession of Greylands' Rest.

And during the time of the great war, travelling was dangerous and difficult."

"Neither could I have believed that he would have settled down so quietly. And to engage in commerce!"

"He grew to like the bustle of business. He had a vast capacity for business, Uncle James."

"No doubt; being a Castlemaine," was the answer, delivered with conscious superiority. "The Castlemaines lack capacity for nothing they may choose to undertake. Good-morning; and I wish you a better errand next time."

As Anthony Castlemaine, on departing, neared the gate leading to the avenue, he saw a young lady approaching it. A fisherman, to whom she was speaking, walked by her side. The latter's words, as he turned away, caught the ear of Anthony.

"You will tell the master then, please, Miss Castlemaine, and say a good word to him for me?"

"Yes, I will, Gleeson; and I am very sorry for the misfortune," she answered. "Good-morning."

Anthony gazed with unfeigned pleasure on the beautiful face presented to him in—as he supposed—his cousin. It was Ethel Reene. The cheeks had acquired a soft rose-flush in the crisp air, the dark brown hair took a wonderfully bright tinge in the sunshine; and in the deep grey eyes, glancing so straight and honestly through their long dark lashes into those of the stranger, there was a sweet candour that caused Anthony Castlemaine to think them the prettiest eyes he had ever seen. He advanced to her direct; said a few words indicative of his delight at meeting her; and, while Ethel was lost in astonishment, he suddenly bent his face forward, and kissed her on either cheek.

For a moment, Ethel Reene was speechless; lost in indignation at the outrage; and then she burst into a flood of tears. What she said, she hardly knew; but all bespoke her sensitive sorrow of the insult. Anthony Castlemaine was overwhelmed. He had intended no insult, but only to give a cousinly greeting after the fashion of his adopted land; and he hastened to express his contrition.

"I beg your pardon a million times. I am so grieved to have pained or offended you. I think you cannot have understood that I am your cousin?"

"Cousin, sir!" she rejoined—and Mr. Castlemaine himself could not have spoken with more haughty contempt. "How dare you presume? I have not a cousin or a relative in the wide world."

The grey eyes were flashing, the delicate face was flushed to crimson. It occurred to Anthony Castlemaine that he must have made some unfortunate mistake. "Indeed," he reiterated, "I beg your pardon. I heard the man address you as Miss Castlemaine."

She was beginning to recover herself. She saw that he did not look at all like a young man who would gratuitously offer any lady an insult, but like a true gentleman. Moreover, there flashed upon her notice the strong likeness his face bore to the Castlemaines; and she thought that what he had done he had done in some error.

"I am not Miss Castlemaine," she condescended to explain, her tone losing part of its anger, but not its pride. "This is my home, and people often call me by the name. But—if I were Miss Castlemaine—who are you, sir, that you should claim to be my cousin? The Castlemaines have no strange cousins."

"I am Anthony Castlemaine, young lady; son of the late Basil Castlemaine, the heir of Greylands. I come from an interview with my Uncle James; and I—I beg your pardon most heartily once more."

"Anthony Castlemaine, the son of Basil Castlemaine!" she exclaimed, nearly every emotion forgotten in astonishment; but a conviction, nevertheless, seizing upon her that it was true. "The son of the lost Basil!"

"I am, indeed, his son," replied Anthony. "He is dead, and I have come over to claim, and, I hope, enter into, my patrimony, Greylands' Rest."

CHAPTER V.

THE BALL.

LIGHTS gleamed from the windows of the banker's house at Stilborough; a flood of light blazed from the hall, and was reflected on the pavement outside, and on the colours of the flowering plants just within the entrance. Mr. Peter Castlemaine and Miss Castlemaine gave a dance that night; and it was the custom to open the door early, and keep it open, for the arrival of the expected guests.

The reception-rooms were in readiness, and gay with their wax lights and flowers. They opened mostly into one another. The largest of them was appropriated to dancing; all its furniture and its carpet had been removed; benches occupied the walls, under the innumerable sconces bearing lights; and the floor was chalked artistically, in a handsome pattern of flowers, after the fashion of the day.

In the small apartment that was her own sitting-room, stood Mary Ursula. In her rich robes of white silk and lace, and in the jewels which had been her mother's, and which it was her father's wish she should wear on grand occasions; with her stately form and her most lovely face, she looked of almost regal beauty. Excitement had flushed her cheeks; on her delicate and most perfect features sat an animation not often seen there. Whatever evil might be overhanging the house, at least no prevision of it rested on Miss Castlemaine; and perhaps few young ladies in all the kingdom could be

found who were possessed of the requisites for happiness in a degree that could vie with the banker's daughter, or who had so entire a sense of it. Beautiful, amiable, clever, rich; the darling of her father; sheltered from every care in her sumptuous home; loving and beloved by a young man worthy of her, and to whom she was soon to be united! In the days to come, Mary Ursula would look back on this time, and tell herself that the very intensity of its happiness might have warned her that it was too bright to last.

He, her lover, was by her side now. He had come early, on purpose to be a few minutes alone with her, before the arrival of the other guests; and they stood together on the hearth-rug. A quiet-looking young man of middle height, with dark hair, just the shade of hers, and rather a pensive and mild cast of face. Such was Mr. Blake-Gordon.

They were conversing of the future—that to both of them looked so bright; of the home that ere long was to be theirs in common. Mr. Blake-Gordon had been for some little time searching for a house, and had not met with a suitable one. But he thought he had found it now.

"It seems to me to be just the thing, Mary," he was saying—for he never called her by her double-name, but "Mary" simply. "Only four miles from Stilborough on the Loughton road; which will be within an easy distance of your father's home and of Sir Richard's. It was by the merest chance I heard this morning that the Wests were going; and we can secure it at once, if we will, before it goes into the market."

Miss Castlemaine knew the house by sight; she had passed it many a time in her drives and seen it nestling away amid the trees. It was called by rather a fanciful name—Raven's Priory.

"It is not to be let, you say, William; only bought."

"Only bought. There will be, I presume, no difficulty made to that with the authorities."

He spoke with a smile. She smiled too. Difficulty!—with the loads of wealth that would be theirs sometime? They might well laugh at the idea.

"Only that—that it is uncertain how long we may require to live in it," she said, with a slight hesitation. "I suppose that—some-time——"

"We shall have to leave it for my father's home. True. But that, I trust, may be a long while off. And then we could re-sell Raven's Priory."

"Yes, of course. Is it a nice place, William?"

"Charming," he replied with enthusiasm. For of course all things, the proposed residence included, wore to him the hue of *couleur de rose*.

"I have never been inside it."

"No. The Wests are churlish people, keeping no company. Report says that Mrs. West is a hypochondriac. They let me go in this morning, and I went over all the house. It is the nicest place, love—and not too large or too small for us; and the Wests have kept it in good condition. You will be charmed with the drawing-rooms, Mary; and the conservatory is one of the best I ever saw. They want us to take to the plants."

"Are they nice?"

"Beautiful. The Wests are moving to London, to be near good advice for her, and they do not expect to get anything of a conservatory there, worth the name. I wonder what your papa will think about this house, Mary? We might tell him of it now. Where is he?"

"He is out," she answered. "Just as he was going up to dress, Thomas Hill sent for him downstairs, and they went out somewhere together. Papa ran up to tell me he would be back as soon as he could, but that I must for once receive the people alone."

"I wish I might stand by your side to help!" he said, impulsively. "Would any of them faint at it?—do you think Mrs. Webb would, if she were here? Ah well—a short while, my darling, and I shall have the right to stand by you."

He stole his arm round her waist, and whispered to her a repetition of those love-vows that had so often before charmed her ear and thrilled her heart. Her hair touched his shoulder; the faint perfume of her costly fan, that she swayed unconsciously as it hung from her wrist, was to him like an odour from Paradise: he recounted to her all the features he remembered of the house that neither of them doubted would be their future home; and the minutes passed in, to both, bliss unutterable.

The crashing up of a carriage—of two carriages it seemed—warned them that this sweet pastime was at an end. Sounds of bustle in the hall succeeded to it: the servants were receiving the first guests.

"Oh William—I forgot—I meant to tell you," she hurriedly whispered. "I had the most ugly dream last night. And you know I very rarely do dream. I have not been able to get it out of my mind all day."

"What was it, Mary?"

"I thought we were separated, you and I; separated for ever. We had quarrelled, I think; that point was not clear; but you went off one way; and I another. It was in the gallery of this house, William. You went out at the other end by the door of the dining-room, and I at this end; and we turned at the last to look at one another. Oh, the look was dreadful! I shall never forget it: so full of pain and sadness: and we knew, both of us knew, that it was the last farewell look: that we should never again meet in this world."

"Oh, my love, my love!" he murmured, bending his face on hers. "And you could let it trouble you!—knowing it was but a dream! Nothing but the decree of God—death—shall ever separate us, Mary. For weal or for woe, we will go through the life here together."

He kissed away the tears that had gathered in her eyes at the remembrance; and Miss Castlemaine turned hastily into one of the larger rooms, and took up her standing there in expectation. For the feet of the gay world were already traversing the gallery.

She welcomed her guests, soon coming in thick and threefold, with the most gracious manner, and the calm repose of bearing that always characterised her, apologising to all for the absence of her father; telling them that he had been called out unexpectedly on some matter of business, but would be in soon. Amid others, came the party from Greylands' Rest, arriving rather late. Mrs. Castlemaine in black velvet, leaning on the arm of her step-son; Ethel Reese walking modestly behind, in a simple dress of white net, adorned with white ribbons. There was many a fine young man present; but never a finer or more attractive one than Harry Castlemaine; with the handsome Castlemaine features, the easy, independent bearing, and the ready tongue.

"Is it of any use to ask whether you are at liberty to honour me with your hand for the first dance, Mary Ursula?" he inquired, after leaving Mrs. Castlemaine on a sofa.

"Not the least, Harry," answered Miss Castlemaine, smiling. "I am engaged for that, and for the second as well."

"Of course. Well, it is all as it should be, I suppose. Given the presence of Mr. Blake Gordon, and no one else has so good a right as he to open the ball with you."

"You will find a substitute for me by the asking, Harry. See all those young ladies around; not one but is glancing towards you with the hope that you may seek her."

He laughed rather consciously. He was perfectly well aware of the universal favour accorded by the ladies, young and old, to Harry Castlemaine. But this time, at any rate, he intended to disappoint them all. He turned to Miss Reese.

"Will you take compassion upon a rejected man, Ethel? Mary Ursula won't have me for the first two dances, you hear; so I appeal to you in all humility to heal the smart. Don't reject me."

"Nonsense, Harry!" was the young lady's answer. "You must not ask *me* for the first dance; it would be like brother and sister dancing together; all the room would resent it in you, and call it bad manners. Choose elsewhere. There's Miss Mountsorrel; she will not say you nay."

"For the dances, no; but she'll not condescend to speak three words to me while they are in process," returned Mr. Harry Castlemaine.

"If you do not dance them with me, Ethel, I shall sit down until the two first dances are over."

He spoke still in the same laughing, half joking manner ; but, nevertheless, there was a ring of decision in the tone of the last words ; and Ethel knew he meant what he said. The Castlemaines rarely broke through any decision they might announce, however lightly it was spoken ; and Harry possessed somewhat of the same persistent will.

"If you make so great a point of it, I will dance with you," observed Ethel. "But I must again say that you ought to take anyone, rather than me."

"I have not seen my uncle yet," remarked Miss Castlemaine to Ethel, as Harry strolled away to pay his devoirs to the room generally. "Where can he be lingering ?"

"Papa is not here, Mary Ursula."

"Not here ! how is that ?"

"Really I don't know," replied Ethel. "When Harry came running out to get into the carriage to-night—we had been sitting in it quite five minutes waiting for him ; but he had been away all day, and was late in dressing—Miles shut the door. 'Don't do that,' said Harry to him, 'the master's not here.' Upon that, Mrs. Castlemaine spoke, and said papa was not coming with us."

"I suppose he will be coming in later," said Mary Ursula, as she moved away to meet fresh guests.

The dancing began with a country dance ; or, as would have been said then, the ball opened with one. Miss Castlemaine and her lover, Mr. Blake Gordon, took their places at its head ; Harry Castlemaine and Miss Reese were next to them. For in those days, people stood much upon etiquette, even in the matter of taking places in a country dance ; precedence being accorded where it was due.

The dance chosen was one called the Triumph. Harry Castlemaine led Mary Ursula down between the line of admiring spectators. William Blake Gordon followed, and they brought the young lady back in triumph. Such was the opening figure. It was a sight to be remembered in after years ; the singular good looks of at least two of the three, the faces of all sparkling with animation and happiness, Harry, the sole male heir of the Castlemaines, with the tall fine form and the handsome face ; and Mary Ursula, so stately and beautiful. Ethel Reese was standing alone, in her quiet loveliness, looking like a snowdrop, and waiting until her turn should come to be in like manner taken down. The faces of all sparkled with animation and happiness, the gala robes of the two young ladies added to the charm of the scene. Many recalled it later ; recalled it with a pang ; for, of those four, ere a year had gone by, one was not, and another's life had been blighted. No prevision, however, rested on any of them this night of what the dark future held in store ; and they revelled in the moment's enjoyment,

gay at heart. Heaven is too merciful to let Fate cast its ominous shade down before the time.

The banker came in ere the first dance was over. Moving about from room to room among his guests, glancing with approving smile at the young dancers, seeing that the card-tables were filled, he at length reached the sofa of Mrs. Castlemaine. She happened to be alone on it just then, and he sat down beside her.

"I don't see James anywhere," he remarked. "Where's he hiding himself?"

"He has not come," replied Mrs. Castlemaine.

"No! How's that? James enjoys a ball."

"Yes, I think he does still, nearly as much as his son Harry."

"Then, what has kept him away?"

"I really do not know. I had thought, nearly to the last, that he meant to come. When I was all but ready myself, finding James had not begun to dress, I sent Harriet to remind him of the lateness of the hour, and she brought word back that her master was not going."

"Did he say why?" asked Mr. Peter Castlemaine.

"No. I went to his study afterwards, and found him seated at his bureau. He seemed busy. All he said to me was, that he should remain at home; neither more nor less. You know, Peter, James rarely troubles himself to give a reason for what he does."

"Well, I am sorry. Sorry that he should miss a pleasant evening, and also because I wanted to speak to him. We may not have many more of these social meetings."

"I suppose not," said Mrs. Castlemaine, assuming that her brother-in-law alluded in an indirect way to his daughter's approaching marriage. "When once you have lost Mary Ursula, there will be nobody to hold festivities for."

"No," said the banker, absently.

"I suppose it will be very soon now."

"What will be soon?"

"The wedding. James thinks it will be after Easter."

"Oh—ay—the wedding," spoke Mr. Peter Castlemaine, with the air of a man who has just caught up some recollection that had slipped from him. "I don't know yet: we shall see: no time has been decided on."

"Close as his brother," thought Mrs. Castlemaine. "No danger that he will disclose anything unless he chooses."

"Will James be coming in to Stilborough to-morrow?" asked the banker.

"I'm sure I cannot tell. He goes out and comes in, you know, without any reference to me. I should fancy he would *not* be coming in, unless he has anything to call him. He has not seemed well to-day; thinks he has caught a cold."

"Ah then, I daresay that's the secret of his staying at home to-night," said Mr. Peter Castlemaine.

"Yes, it may be. I did not think of that. And he has also been very much annoyed to-day: and, you know, Peter, if once James is thoroughly put out of temper, it takes some little time to put him in it again."

The banker nodded assent. "What has annoyed him?"

"A very curious thing," replied Mrs. Castlemaine: "you will hardly believe it when I tell you. Some young man——"

Breaking off suddenly, she glanced around to make sure that no one was within hearing. Then drawing nearer to the banker, went on in a lowered voice.

"Some young man presented himself this morning at Greylands' Rest, pretending to want to put in a claim to the estate."

Abstracted though the banker had been throughout the brief interview, these words aroused him to the quick. In one moment, he was the calm, shrewd, attentive business man, Peter Castlemaine, his head erect, his keen eyes observant.

"I do not understand you, Mrs. Castlemaine."

"Neither do I understand," she rejoined. "James said just a word or two to me, and I gathered the rest."

"Who was the young man?"

"Flora described him as wearing a coat trimmed with fur; and Miles thought he spoke with somewhat of a foreign accent," replied Mrs. Castlemaine, deviating unconsciously from the question, as ladies sometimes do deviate.

"But don't you know who he was? Did he give no account of himself?"

"He calls himself Anthony Castlemaine."

As the name left her lips, a curious kind of change, as though he were startled, passed momentarily over the banker's countenance. But he neither stirred nor spoke.

"When the card was brought in with that name upon it—James happened to be in the red parlour, talking with me about a new governess—I said it must be an old card of your father's that somebody had got hold of. But it turned out not to be that. What he wants to make out is, that he is a son of Basil Castlemaine."

"Did James see him?"

"Oh dear yes. Their interview lasted more than an hour."

"And he told James he was Basil's son?—this young man?"

"I think so. At any rate, the young man told Ethel he was. She happened to meet him as he was leaving the house, and he introduced himself to her as Anthony Castlemaine, Basil's son, and said he had come over to claim his inheritance—Greylands' Rest."

"And where's Basil?" asked the banker, after a pause.

"Dead."

"Dead?"

"So the young man wishes to make appear. My opinion is, he must be some impostor."

"An impostor, no doubt," assented the banker, slowly. "I only wonder that we have not—under the circumstances—had people here before, claiming to be connected with us."

"And I am sure the matter has annoyed James very much," pursued Mrs. Castlemaine. "He betrayed it in his manner; he was not at all like himself all the afternoon. I should make short work of it if the man came again, were I James, and threaten him with the law."

Mr. Peter Castlemaine said no more, and presently rose to join other of his guests. But as he talked to one, laughed with another, listened to a third; his head bent in attention, his eyes looking straight into their eyes; none had an idea that these signs of interest were evinced mechanically, and that his mind was far away.

He had enough complexity and trouble of his own just then, as Heaven knew; very much indeed on this particular evening; but this other complexity that appeared to be arising for his brother James added to it. To Mrs. Castlemaine's scornfully expressed opinion that the man was an impostor, he had assented just in the same way that he was now talking with his guests—mechanically. For, some instinct, or prevision, call it what you will, lay on the banker's heart that the man would turn out to be no impostor, but the veritable son of the exile, Basil.

Peter Castlemaine was much attached to his brother James, and for James's own sake he would have regretted that any annoyance or trouble should arise for him; but he had also a selfish motive for regretting it. In his dire strait as to money—for to that it had now come—he had been rapidly making up his mind that evening to appeal to James to let him have some. The appeal might not be successful under the most favourable auspices: he knew that: but, with this trouble looming for the Master of Greylands, he foresaw it must and would fail.

Supper over—the elaborate, heavy, sit-down supper of those days, and the two dances following upon it—most of the guests departed. Mr. Blake Gordon, seeking about for the banker to wish him good-night, at length found him standing over the fire in the deserted card-room. Absorbed though he was in his own happiness, the young man could but notice the flood-tide of care on the banker's brow. It cleared off, as though by magic, when the banker looked up and saw him.

"Is it you, William? I thought you had left."

"I should hardly go, sir, without wishing you good-night. What a delightful evening it has been!"

"Ay, I think you have all enjoyed yourselves."

"Oh very, very much."

"Well, youth is the time for enjoyment," observed the banker. "We can never again find the zest in it, once youth is past."

"You look tired, sir; otherwise I—I might have ventured to trespass on you for five minutes' conversation, late though it be," pursued Mr. Blake Gordon, with some hesitation.

"Tired!—not at all. You may take five minutes; and five to that, William."

"It is about our future residence, sir. Raven's Priory is in the market: and I think—and Mary thinks—it will just suit us."

"Ay; I heard more than a week ago that the Wests were leaving." The words took William Blake Gordon by surprise. He looked at the banker.

"Did you, sir!—more than a week ago! And, did it not strike you that it would be a very suitable place for us?"

"I cannot say that I thought much about it," was the banker's answer; and he was twirling an ornament on the mantel-piece about with his hand as he spoke: a small, costly vase of old china from Dresden.

"But *don't* you think it would be, sir?"

"I daresay it might be. The gardens and conservatories have been well kept-up; and you and Mary Ursula have both a weakness for rare flowers."

That was perfectly true. And the "weakness" showed itself then, for the young man went off into a rapturous description of the wealth of Raven's Priory in that respect. The ten minutes slipped away to twenty; and in his own enthusiasm Mr. Blake Gordon did not notice the absence of it in his hearer.

"But I must not keep you longer, sir," he suddenly said, as his eyes caught the hands of the clock. "Perhaps you will let me see you about it to-morrow. Or allow my father to see you—that will be better."

"Not to-morrow," said Mr. Peter Castlemaine. "I shall be particularly engaged all day. Some other time."

"Whenever you please, sir. Only—we must take care that we are not forestalled in the purchase. Much delay might——"

"We can obtain a promise of the first refusal," interrupted the banker in a somewhat impatient tone. "That will not be difficult."

"True. Good-night, sir. And, thank you for giving us this most charming evening."

"Good-night, William."

But Mr. Blake Gordon had not yet said his last farewell to his betrothed wife; and lovers never think *that* can be spoken often enough. He found her in the music-room, seated before the organ. She was waiting for her father.

"We shall have Raven's Priory, Mary," he whispered, speaking in his great hopefulness; and his voice was joyous, and his pale face had a glow on it not often seen there. "Your papa, himself, says how beautiful the gardens and conservatories are."

"Yes," she softly answered. "We shall be sure to have it."

"I may not stay, Mary: I only came back to tell you this. And to wish you good night once again."

Her hand was within his arm, and they walked together to the end of the music-room. All the lights had been put out, save two. Just within the door, he halted and took his farewell. His arm was around her, his lips were upon hers.

"May all good angels guard you this happy night,—my love!—my promised wife!"

He went down the corridor swiftly; she stole her blushing face to the opening of the door, to take a last look at him. At that moment a crash, as of some frail thing broken, was heard in the card-room. Mr. Blake Gordon turned into it; Mary followed him.

The beautiful Dresden vase lay on the stone flags of the hearth, shattered into many atoms. It was one that Mary set great store by for it had been a purchase of her mother's.

"Oh papa! How did it happen?"

"My dear, I swept it off unwittingly with my elbow: I am very sorry for it," said Mr. Peter Castlemaine.

CHAPTER VI.

ANTHONY CASTLEMAINE ON HIS SEARCH.

THE hour of dinner with all business men in Stilborough was half-past one o'clock in the day. Perhaps Mr. Peter Castlemaine was the only man who did not really dine then; but he took his luncheon; which came to the same thing. It was the recognised daily interregnum in the public doings of the town—this half-hour between half-past one and two: consequently shops, banks, offices, all were virtually though not actually closed. The bank of Mr. Peter Castlemaine made no exception. Except on Thursday, market day, the bank was left to the care of one clerk during this half-hour.

It was the day after the ball. The bank had been busy all the morning, and Mr. Peter Castlemaine had been away the best part of it. He came back at half-past one, just as the clerks were filing out.

"Do you want me, sir?" asked Thomas Hill, standing back with his hat in his hand; and it was the dreadfully worn, perplexed look on his master's face that induced him to ask the question.

"Just for a few minutes," was the reply. "Come into my room."

Once there, the door closed upon them, they sat in dire tribulation

There was no dinner for poor Thomas Hill that day; there was no lunch for his master: the hour's perplexities were all in all.

On the previous evening, some stranger had arrived at Stilborough, had put up at the chief inn there, the Turk's Head; and then, after inquiring the private address of Mr. Peter Castlemaine's head clerk had betaken himself thither. Thomas Hill was seated at his tea when the gentleman was shown in. It proved to be a Mr. Fosbrook from London: and the moment the clerk heard the name, Fosbrook, and realised the fact that the owner of it was in actual person before him, he turned as cold as a stone, for his presence bespoke danger to Mr. Peter Castlemaine. That he had come down to seek explanations which might no longer be put off, the clerk felt sure of: and the fact of his seeking out *him* instead of his master, proved that he suspected something was more than wrong. The clerk had known Mr. Fosbrook in the years gone by.

Thomas Hill dared not afford explanation himself, for he knew not what it would be safe to say, what not. He induced Mr. Fosbrook to return to his inn, undertaking to bring his master to wait on him there. To the banker's house he would not take the stranger; for the gaiety, of which it was that night the scene, was not altogether a pleasant thing to show to a creditor. Leaving Mr. Fosbrook at the Turk's Head he came on.

Mr. Peter Castlemaine went at once to the inn. He did not dare do otherwise. The interview was not a long one; for the banker, pleading the fact of having friends at home, postponed it until the morning.

It was with this gentleman that his morning had been spent; that he had now, half-after one o'clock, just come home from. With the weary look in his face, and the more than weary pain at his heart.

"And what is the result, sir?" asked Thomas Hill as they sat together.

"The result is, that he will wait a few days, Hill; three or four, he says. Perhaps that may be made five or six: I don't know. After that—if he is not satisfied by tangible proofs that things are right and not wrong, so far as he is concerned—there will be no further waiting."

"And the storm must burst?"

"The storm must burst," echoed Peter Castlemaine.

"Oh but, sir, my dear master, what can be done in those few poor days?" cried Thomas Hill in agitation. "Nothing. You must have more time allowed you."

"I had much ado to get that, Hill. I had to *LIE* for it," he added in a lower tone.

"Do you see a chance yourself, sir?"

"Only one. There is a chance; but it is a very remote one. That last venture of mine has turned up trumps: I had the news by the mail this morning: and if I can realise the funds in time, the present danger may be averted."

"And the future trouble also," spoke Thomas Hill, catching at the straw of hope. "Why, sir, that will bring in a mine of wealth."

"Yes. The only real want now is time. Time ! time ! I have said it before perhaps too sanguinely ; I can say it in all truth now."

"And, sir—did you not show this to be the case to Mr. Fosbrook ?"

"I did. But alas, I had to deny to him my other pressing liabilities—and he questioned sharply. Nevertheless, I shall tide it over, all of it, if I can only secure the time. That account of Merrit's—we may as well go over it together now, Thomas. It will not take long."

They sat down to the table together. A thought was running through Thomas Hill's mind, and he spoke it as he opened the ledgers.

"With this good news in store, sir, making repayment certain—for if time be given you, you will now have plenty—don't you think Mr. Castlemaine would advance you funds ?"

"I don't know," said the banker. "James seems to be growing cautious. And this trouble that may be looming upon him, will make him more so."

"What trouble ?" asked Thomas Hill.

"Some man, I hear, has made his appearance at Greylands, calling himself Anthony Castlemaine, and saying that he is a son of my brother Basil," replied the banker confidentially.

"Never !" cried the old man. "But, sir, if he be, how should that bring trouble on Mr. Castlemaine ?"

"Because the stranger says he wants to claim Greylands' Rest."

"He must be out of his mind," said Thomas Hill. "Greylands' Rest is Mr. Castlemaine's ; safe enough too, I presume."

"But a man such as this may give trouble, don't you see."

"No, sir, I don't see it—with all deference to your opinion. Mr. Castlemaine has only to show him it is his——"

A knock at the room door interrupted the sentence. The clerk rose to open it, and received a card and a message. His master looked rather startled as he read the name on it : Anthony Castlemaine.

Somewhere about an hour before, young Anthony Castlemaine, after a late breakfast *à la fourchette*, had turned out of the Dolphin Inn. Halting for a few seconds to gaze across beyond the beach, for he thought the sea the most beautiful object in nature, and believed he should never tire of looking at it, he went on up the hill, past the church, and was fairly on his road to Stilborough. It was a lonely road enough ; never a dwelling to be seen all the way, save a farm homestead or two, lying away amid their buildings ; but Anthony Castlemaine walked slowly, taking in all the points and features of his native land, that were so strange to him. He stood to read the milestones ; he leaned on the fences ; he admired the tall fine trees, leafless though they were ; he critically surveyed the two or three carts and waggons that passed. The sky was blue, the sun bright, he enjoyed the walk and did not

hurry himself: but nevertheless he at length reached Stilborough, and found out the house of the banker. He rang at the private door.

The servant who opened it saw a young man dressed in a rather uncommon kind of over-coat. The face was that of a stranger; but Stephen fancied it was a face he had seen before.

"Is my Uncle Peter at home?"

"Sir!" returned the servant, staring at him. For the only nephew the banker possessed, so far as Stephen knew, was the son of the Master of Greylands. "What name did you please to ask for, sir?"

"Mr. Peter Castlemaine. This is his residence, I am told."

"Yes, sir, it is."

"Can I see him? Is he at home?"

"He is at home, in his private room, sir; I fancy he is busy. I'll ask if you can see him. What name shall I say, sir?"

"You can take my card in. And please say to your master that if he is busy, I can wait."

The man glanced at the card as he knocked at the door of the private room, and read the name: "Anthony Castlemaine." "It must be a nephew from over the sea," he thought: "he looks foreign. Perhaps a son of that lost Basil."

Thomas Hill took in the card and the message. He came back, saying the gentleman was to wait: Mr. Peter Castlemaine would see him in a quarter of an hour. So the servant, beguiled by the family name, thought he should do right to conduct the stranger upstairs to the presence of Miss Castlemaine, and said so, while helping him to take off his over-coat.

"Shall I say any name, sir?" asked the man, as he laid his hand on the door handle.

"Mr. Anthony Castlemaine."

Mary Ursula was alone. She sat near the fire doing nothing, and very happy in her idleness, for her thoughts were buried in the pleasures of the past gay night, and a smile was on her face. When the announcement was made, she rose in great surprise to confront the visitor. The servant shut the door, and Anthony came forward.

He did not commit a similar breach of good manners to the one of the previous day; the results of that had shown him that fair stranger-cousins may not be indiscriminately saluted with kisses in England. He bowed, and held out his hand with a frank smile. Mary did not take it: she was utterly puzzled, and stood gazing at him. The likeness in his face to her father's family struck her forcibly. It must be premised that she did not yet know anything about Anthony, or that any such person had made his appearance in England.

"If I understood the name aright—Anthony Castlemaine—you must be, I presume, some relative of my late grandfather's, sir?"

He introduced himself fully then; who he was, and all about it.

Mary met his hand cordially. She never doubted him or his identity for a moment. She had the gift of reading countenances, and she took to the pleasant, honest face at once, so like the Castlemaines in features, but with a more open expression.

"I am *sure* you are my cousin," she said in cordial welcome. "I think I should have known you for a Castlemaine had I seen your face in a crowd."

"I see, myself, how like I am to the Castlemaines, to my father and grandfather : though unfortunately I have not inherited their height and strength," he added, with a slight laugh. "My mother was small and slight : I take after her."

"And my poor Uncle Basil is dead !"

"Alas, yes ! Only but a few weeks ago. These black clothes that I wear are in memorial of him."

It was a long while since Miss Castlemaine had met with anyone she liked so well at a first interview, and the quarter of an hour passed quickly. At its end, the servant again appeared, saying his master would see him in his private room : so he was conducted to it.

But, as it seemed, Mr. Peter Castlemaine did not wait to receive him : for almost immediately he presented himself before his daughter.

"This person has been with *you*, I find, Mary Ursula ! Very wrong of Stephen to have brought him up here !

"I am glad he did bring him, papa," was her impulsive answer. "You have no idea what a sensible, pleasant young man he is. I could almost wish he were more even than a cousin—a brother."

"Why, my dear, you must be dreaming !" cried the banker after a pause of astonishment. "Cousin !—brother ! It does not do to take strange people on trust in this way. The man may be, and I daresay *is*, an adventurer : no more related to the Castlemaines than I am related to the King of England."

She laughed. "You may take *him* upon trust, papa, without doubt or fear. He is a Castlemaine all over, save in height. The likeness to grandpapa is wonderful ; it is so even to you and to Uncle James. But he says he has all needful credential proofs with him."

The banker, who was then looking from the window, stood fingering the bunch of seals that hung from his long and massive watch-chain, his habit sometimes when in deep thought. Presently he turned.

"You believe, then, my dear, that he is really what he makes himself out to be—Basil's son ?"

"Papa, I think there can be no question of it. Rely upon it, the young man is not one who would lay himself out to deceive, or to countenance deception : he is evidently honest and open as the day."

"Well, I am very sorry," returned the banker. "It may bring a great deal of trouble upon James."

"In what way can it bring him trouble, papa?" questioned Mary Ursula in surprise.

"This young man—as I am informed—has come over to put in a claim to Greylands' Rest."

"To Greylands' Rest!" she repeated. "But that is Uncle James's. How can anyone else claim it?"

"People may put in a claim to it; there's no law against that; as I fear this young man means to do," replied the banker. "He may cost James no end of bother and expense."

"But, papa, you must be misinformed. I feel sure his young man is not one who would attempt to claim anything that is not his own."

"But if he supposes it to be his own?"

"What, Greylands' Rest? Papa, how can that be?"

"My dear child, as yet I know almost nothing. Nothing but a few words that Mrs. Castlemaine said to me last night. However, I suppose I must go down and see him."

As soon as Peter Castlemaine entered his private room, and let his eyes rest on the face of the young man who met him so frankly, he saw the great likeness to the Castlemaines. That it was really his nephew, Basil's son, he had entertained little doubt of from the first; none since the recent short interview with his daughter above. With this conviction on his mind, it never would have occurred to him to deny the young man's identity, and he accepted it at once. But though he called him "Anthony," and now and then by mistake "Basil," he did not show any mark of affection, but was distant and cold. Taking his place in his handsome chair, turned sideways to the closed desk, he faced the young man seated before him.

A few minutes were naturally spent in questions and answers, chiefly as to Basil's career abroad. Young Anthony gave every information freely—just as he had done to his Uncle James on the previous day. After that, he passed on to the subject of the inheritance.

"Perhaps, Uncle Peter, you will not refuse to give me some information about my grandfather's estate, 'Greylands' Rest' " he began. "My father always assured me it would be mine. He said it would come to him at his father's death, and then to me afterwards——"

"He must have spoken without justifiable warranty," interrupted the banker. "It did not necessarily lapse to Basil, or to anyone else. Your grandfather could leave it to whom he would."

"Of course: we never thought otherwise. But my father always said that it would never be left away from him."

"Then I say, that he spoke without sufficient warranty," repeated the banker. "Am I to understand that you have come over to this country to put in a claim to Greylands' Rest, on this sole justification?"

"My father, on his dying bed, charged me to come and claim it, Uncle Peter. It was only then that he learnt his father was dead."

When I presented myself to my Uncle James yesterday, he seemed much to resent the fact that I should put in any claim to the estate; he told me I had no right to do so; he said it was his."

"Well?" said the banker; for the young man had paused.

"Uncle Peter, I am not unreasonable. I come home to find my Uncle James in possession of the estate, and quite ready, as I gather, to oppose my claim to it; or, I would better say, to treat me and my claim with contempt. Now I do not forget that my grandfather *might* have left it to Uncle James; that he had the power to do so——"

"Most undoubtedly he had," again interrupted the banker. "And I can tell you, that he never, to the very last, allowed anybody to interfere with his wish and will."

"Well, I say I am not unreasonable, Uncle Peter. I should not attempt to present myself here and lay claim to the estate in the teeth of facts. I told Uncle James so. Once let me be convinced that the estate was really and fairly bequeathed to him, and I would not, for the world, wish to disturb him in its possession. I am not a rogue."

"But he is in possession, Anthony; and it appears that you do wish to disturb him," remonstrated Mr. Peter Castlemaine.

"I beg your pardon; I think you have not quite caught my meaning. What I want is to be assured that Greylands' Rest was left away from my father. If Uncle James came into it by will, or by legal deed of any kind, let him just *show* me the deed or the will, and that will suffice."

"You doubt his word, then?"

Young Anthony hesitated, before replying; and then spoke out with ingenuous candour.

"The fact is, Uncle Peter, I deem it *right* to assure myself by proof of how the matter stands; for my father warned me that there might be treachery——"

"Treachery!" came the quick, echoing interposition of the banker; his dark eyes flashing fire.

"My father thought it possible," quietly continued the young man; "he feared that, even though Greylands' Rest was legally mine, my claim to it might be opposed. That is one reason why I press for proof. Another reason is, that I find that doubts were already existing abroad as to how Mr. James Castlemaine came into the estate, and whether it was lawfully his."

"Doubts existing abroad! Doubts where?"

"Amid the neighbours, the people of Greylands. I have heard one and another talk of it."

"Oh, indeed!" was the cold rejoinder. "Pray where are you staying?"

"At the Dolphin Inn, Uncle Peter. When I descended at it, and saw the flaming dolphin on the sign-board, splashing up the water, I could not help smiling; for my father had described it to me so accurately, that it seemed like an old acquaintance."

Mr. Peter Castlemaine made no rejoinder, and there ensued a silence. In truth, his own difficulties were so weighty, that they kept pressing on his mind throughout in an undercurrent of trouble.

"Will *you*, Uncle Peter, give me some information of the true state of the case?" resumed the young man. "I came here, purposely intending to ask you. You see, I want to be placed at a certainty, one way or another. I again repeat, that I am not unreasonable; I only ask to be dealt with fairly and honourably. If Greylands' Rest is not mine, show me that it is not; if it is mine, I ought to have it. Perhaps you will tell me, Uncle Peter, how it was left."

The banker suddenly let drop his seals, with which he had been playing during the last appeal, and turned his full attention to the speaker, answering in a more frank tone than he had yet spoken.

"When your father, Basil, went away, he took his full portion with him—a third of the money he would ever inherit. I received my portion; James received his. Nothing remained but Greylands' Rest; and that could be disposed of as your grandfather should please. Does it strike you as any strange thing, Anthony, that he should prefer its passing to the son who was always with him, rather than to the son who had abandoned him and his home, and whom he did not even know to be alive?"

"Uncle Peter, I have said that I see reasons why my grandfather might make his second son his heir, rather than his eldest. If he did so, I am quite ready and willing to accept the fact, once I am convinced of it. *That* I must be. Will you give me the particulars of the bequest? Was the estate devised by will, or by deed of gift?"

"I decline to give you more particulars than I have already given," was the prompt reply of the banker. "The affair is not mine; it is my brother James's. You find him in secure possession of the estate; you are told that it is his; and that ought to suffice. It is a very presumptuous proceeding on the part of Basil's son, to come over in this extraordinary manner, without warning of any kind, and attempt to question the existing state of things. That is my opinion, Anthony."

"Is this your final resolve, Uncle Peter?—not to help me?"

"My final, irrevocable resolve."

Anthony took his hat, and put forth his hand. "I am very sorry, Uncle Peter. It might have saved so much trouble."

The banker shook hands: but he did not ask him to remain, or to call again. "One hint I will give you, Anthony," he said. "Were you to expend your best years and your best energies upon this search you would be no wiser than you are now. The Castlemaines do not brook interference; neither are their affairs conducted in that loose manner that can afford a possibility of their being inquired into. We know how to hold our own."

"I am a Castlemaine too, uncle, and can hold my own with the

best of them. Nothing will turn me from my course in this matter save the proofs I have asked for. Good-day, Uncle Peter."

He put on his coat, and went forth into the street. There he halted ; looking this way and that way, as though uncertain of his route.

"A few doors on the right hand, on the other side the market-house," he repeated to himself. "Then I must cross the street, and so onwards."

He crossed over, went on past the market-house, and looked attentively at the doors on the other side. On one of those doors was a brass plate : "Mr. Knivett, attorney-at-law." Anthony Castlemaine rang the bell, asked if the lawyer was at home, and sent in one of his cards. He was shown into a small back room. At a table, strewn with papers and pens, sat a little old man with a bald head, who was evidently regarding the card with the utmost astonishment. He turned his spectacles on Anthony.

"Do I see Mr. Knivett, the avoué?" he asked, substituting for once a French term for an English one, perhaps unconsciously.

"I am Mr. Knivett, sir, attorney-at-law."

"In the frank, free way that seemed so especially to characterise him Anthony Castlemaine put out his hand, as to a friend.

"You knew my father well, sir. Will you receive his son for old memories' sake?"

"Your father?" asked Mr. Knivett questioningly : but nevertheless meeting the hand with his own.

"Basil Castlemaine. He who went away so long ago from Greylands' Rest."

"Bless my heart!" cried Mr. Knivett, snatching off his glasses in his surprise. "Basil Castlemaine! I never thought to hear of him again. Why it must be—ay, since he left, it must be hard upon five-and-thirty years! Is he come back?"

Anthony had again to go over the old story. His father's doings abroad and his father's death, and his father's charge to him to come home and claim his paternal inheritance : he rehearsed it all. Mr. Knivett, who had put his spectacles on again, never ceased gazing at the relator. Not for a moment did any doubt occur to him that the young man was other than he represented himself to be : the face was the face of a Castlemaine, and of a truthful gentleman.

"But I have come to you, not only to show myself to a friend of my poor father's in his youth, but also as a client," proceeded Anthony, after a short while. "I have need of a lawyer's advice, which I am prepared to pay for according to the charges of the English country. Will you advise me, sir?"

"To be sure," replied Mr. Knivett. "What advice is it that you want?"

"First of all, sir—In the days when my father was at home, you were

the solicitor to my grandfather, old Anthony Castlemaine. Did you continue to be so until his death?"

"I did."

"Then you can, I hope, give me some particulars that I desire to know. To whom was Greylands' Rest bequeathed?—and in what manner was it devised?"

Mr. Knivett shook his head. "I cannot give you any information upon the point," he said. "I must refer you to Mr. Castlemaine."

"I have applied to Mr. Castlemaine, and to Mr. Peter Castlemaine also, and neither of them will tell me anything. They meet me with a point-blank refusal to do so."

"Ah; I daresay. The Castlemaines never choose to be questioned."

"Why will not you afford me the information, Mr. Knivett?"

"For two reasons. First, because the probability is that—pray understand me, young sir; note well what I say—the probability is that I do not possess the information to give you. Secondly, if I did possess it, my relation with the family would preclude my imparting it. I am the attorney to the Castlemaines."

"Their confidential attorney?"

"Some of the business I transact for them is confidential."

"But see here, Mr. Knivett—what am I to do? I come over at the solemn command of my father, delivered to me on his death-bed, to put in my claim to the estate. I find my Uncle James in possession of it. He says it is his. Well and good: I do not say it is quite unlikely to be so. But when I say to him, show me the vouchers for it; the deed or the will that you hold it by, he shuts himself up and says he will not show me anything—that I must be satisfied with his word. Now, is that satisfactory?"

"I daresay it does not appear so to you."

"If there was a will made, let them allow me to see the will; if it was bequeathed by a deed of gift, let me read the deed of gift. Can there be anything more fair than what I ask? If Greylands' Rest is legally my Uncle James's, I should not be so foolish, or so unjust, as to wish to deprive him of it."

Mr. Knivett sat back in his chair, pressing the tips of his fingers together, and politely listening. But comment made he none.

"To go back home, without prosecuting my claim, is what I shall never do, unless I am convinced that I have no claim to prosecute," continued Anthony. "Well, sir, I shall want a legal gentleman to advise me how to set about the investigation of the affair; and hence I come to you."

"I have shown you why I cannot advise you," said Mr. Knivett—and his manner was ever so many shades colder. "I am the attorney to Mr. Castlemaine."

"You cannot help me at all, then?"

"Not at all; in this."

It seemed rather hard to the young man, as he rose from his seat to depart. All he wanted was fair play, open dealing; and he could not get it.

"My Uncle Peter, with whom I have just been, said a thing that I did not like," he stayed to remark; "it rather startled me. I presume—I should think—that he is a man of strict veracity?"

"Mr. Peter Castlemaine? Undoubtedly."

"Well, sir, what he said was this. That were I to spend my best years and energies in the search after information, I should be no wiser at the end than I am now."

"That I believe to be extremely probable," cordially assented the lawyer.

"But do you see the position in which it would leave me? Years and years!—and I am not to be satisfied one way or the other?"

The attorney froze again. "Ah; yes; true."

"Well, sir, I will say good-day to you. And I can only say I wish you had been at liberty to advise me."

They parted; and the young man found himself in the street again. It had been one of the brightest of days; but during this short interview at the lawyer's, the weather seemed to have changed. The skies, as Anthony Castlemaine looked up, were now dull and threatening. He buttoned his warm coat about him, and began his walk back to Greylands.

"Je crois que nous aurons de la neige," he said, in the familiar language to which he was most accustomed; "et je n'ai pas de parapluie. N'importe; je marcherai vite."

Walk fast! And to Greylands! Could poor Anthony Castlemaine have foreseen the black pall of Fate, already closing upon him like a shadow, he had turned his steps away from Greylands for ever.

(To be continued.)

TWO DAYS IN THE LIFE OF THE LATE EMPEROR.

WHAT a strange life of vicissitudes was his who has just passed from among us, amid our deep sorrows and regrets—Louis Napoleon, the French Emperor! Born in a royal palace, and dying a private exile from his native land!—that first scene and that closing one were fitting types of the changing circumstances in his career. Now in prison, and then wielding the sceptre of one of the greatest thrones in the world; now obscurely inhabiting what was little better than a garret, and anon swaying the destiny of millions in his robes of purple; the checkered days of Louis Napoleon present a strange lesson on the impotence of man. Earthly sovereigns are great, but overruling Fate is greater.

There were two certain days in his life that exemplified the contrasts of that life in an eminent degree. On Thursday, August the 6th, 1840—as hot a day as the hot sun, blistering the white walls of Boulogne-sur-Mer, ever gave us—an early commotion stirred the town. Now, as I write, I can see the scene; re-live the vague alarm. The heat poured in through the closed green persiennes of the chamber windows; people below were running on and off the port, talking wildly; the drums of the National Guard began to beat to arms. What could be the matter?—what was taking place? A pale servant-maid rushed in with terrified words. “*Mon Dieu, on dit que nous sommes pris : que le Prince Louis Napoleon s’est débarqué de la mer avec une grande armée pour prendre la ville !*”

It was the day of that mistaken escapade of his, that for him was to end so unfortunately—the landing in Boulogne. The “*grande armée*” revolved itself into only fifty followers: almost as the girl spoke, the expedition was virtually at an end. Louis Napoleon had come over from London in the “*City of Edinburgh*,” a hired steamer, with the Count Montholon, General Voisin, and those other few friends, a wild intention in his head of wresting the French crown from Louis Philippe. But Boulogne was loyal to the Citizen King, and Prince Louis was captured. In attempting to enter the gates of the upper town from the heights, they were closed in his face; it was said by an Englishman who recognized him for Prince Louis; and the Prince and his followers were taken prisoners. Louis Philippe sent him for trial and he was condemned to perpetual confinement in the fortress of Ham. There he remained six years, and then effected his escape in the disguise of a workman—a carpenter with a plank on his shoulder. For the third time, he took refuge in England, and “*waited his time.*” In 1852 he was made Emperor.

Monday, the 26th of September, 1853, was a great day for

FORESHADOWING.

I KNOW, my friend,
 We never have been lovers ; but when we
 Of these sweet summer-hours shall find the end,
 And there shall be
 A courteous close to all our pleasant speech,—
 When you go out into the hurrying crowd,
 To battle like a warrior iron-browed,
 For all the worldly blessings which you claim,
 Wealth, power, and fame—
 Things which I do not crave and cannot reach—
 I wonder if your heart will be the same,
 Will beat as evenly and tranquilly—
 Away from me ?
 If, when you find your separate life once more,
 It will be as whole and happy as before ?

It may be so—
 Ambition has broad leaves, which overgrow
 The feebler heart-plants, blooming small and low ;
 And yet, I think
 When time, or change, or both have snapped the
 link
 Which holds us now so lightly heart to heart,
 When you have found out new and pleasant ways
 From these apart—
 Have loved fair women, and have known great men,
 Perhaps grown great yourself, and tasted praise—
 Despite the rosy ties which bind you then,
 You will look back to these tame, quiet days
 With dim, strange pain—
 And haply in your dreaming think of me
 Half mournfully,
 Saying—while all surrounding witcheries
 Seem dull and vain,
 And Beauty's smile, and Flattery's ministries
 Lose, for the time, their hold on heart and brain—
 " Ah, me ! how little she was like to these !
 Would I could look upon that face again ! "

Dunkerque ; a day that its inhabitants are recalling now with sad regret—for it brought the Emperor and his gracious wife, only a few months married, within its strongly fortified walls. This visit had been expected for some weeks, and various alterations were made in anticipation at the sous-prefecture. That the Emperor and Empress would stay at least a night in the town was taken for granted. The municipal council of Dunkerque met to consider in what manner they could best show their loyalty ; their ladies did the same. Twenty of these French-Flemish dames and twenty demoiselles were selected to form “a court” for the Empress, and they spared no expense to get themselves up accordingly. In the midst of it some terrible news arrived—the Empress was not coming. The ladies rushed to the Sous-Prefecture in wild commotion.

“Is it true?” they gasped.

“Mon Dieu, oui ! On craint que c’est vrai,” responded madame, the wife of the sous-prefet.

The dames were in despair ; the demoiselles shed tears.

“All our expensive robes ! They’ll not be of any use to us : we can never hope for another occasion of wearing them. Court dresses in Dunkerque ! Ma foi ! Point d’espérance !”

“Our lovely white costumes, our wreaths, our flowers !” groaned the “demoiselles d’honneur” in prospective. “Look here ! can’t we form a court for the Emperor ?”

But soon another despatch arrived. The Empress was coming.

All the preparations went on. For the decorations of the streets, for the ball at the theatre in the evening, for the music and fireworks of the second day. Everybody expected an invitation to the ball, and everybody got it ; all the French and all the English.

The streets presented a pretty sight. No two were decorated alike. Some were a succession of green bowers—and where the trees and the boughs and the shrubs came from, remained a puzzle always ; for the flat country around was not fertile in such. Wreaths, festoons, and flowers were drooped from pole to pole, from window to window : and large street-chandeliers, peculiar to Dunkerque, composed of little pieces of thick glass, which wave and rattle pleasantly in the breeze, were suspended in the streets. The air was a perfect mass of flags, mostly of the tri-colour, not only flying from the poles and the cords and the festoons, but waving from every window. From three or four houses, inhabited by loyal Englishmen, the glorious British flag, large and powerful, waved out. In the Place Jean Bart tri-coloured draperies of calico, blue, white, and red, were hung round the walls of the houses : flags flew in abundance, and coloured lamps were with them, side by side. No end of eagles, in all the colours of the rainbow, and as brazen as gilt could make them, were hoisted atop of the houses and at the corners of streets. A beautiful triumphal arch, with a colossal

eagle for its summit, was erected at the commencement of the street leading to the park : it looked like a shifting scene in a playhouse. From the top of the high tower, opposite the Grande Eglise, streamed out several long lines of little flags; they were carried out to a considerable distance, almost at a right angle, and there fastened to the ground. It had a wonderfully pretty effect, looking not unlike wings. At the end of the Rue de l'Eglise, the fishermen erected a triumphal arch, the component parts of the structure being barrels and fishing-nets. On the port was another archway, raised by the harbour workmen; and this was constructed of wheelbarrows, shovels, and chain pumps.

Sunday, the 25th, was a most bustling day, as it always is in France, and the workmen were busy with their preparations in all parts of the town. But a gloom hung around, for the day was cold, windy, and pouring wet. In spite of the pretty streets and the green shrubs, the draperies and the clusters of coloured lamps, the fine arches and the chandeliers, the flags and the streamers, everybody looked glum; for, with such weather, what pleasure would there be on the morrow?

The Emperor and Empress had arrived that morning at St. Omer, their object being to visit the Helfaut camp. People flocked into St. Omer to see them. The royal couple went to the camp in a close carriage. The Emperor mounted a superb charger, to review the troops; the Empress, with two of her ladies, remained in the carriage. Crowds upon crowds rushed to the camp, and enjoyed themselves there on foot, ladies as well as gentlemen, the rain coming down in torrents, and the slop knee-deep. A worse day could not be imagined. Shoes were lost in the mud, and abandoned; boots had to be cut off the feet piecemeal; dresses and bonnets were spoiled for good. "Never mind ourselves," cried the excited and loyal spectators; "if we are wet, the Emperor's dripping—look at him!" The camp was situated on the plateau of a high and lofty hill, the ascent to which is somewhat formidable; and French hired horses, and French hired vehicles, and French hired coachmen, not being cast in the adventurous mould, they flatly refused to go up it. So they remained comfortably at the bottom, and the company they had conveyed thither toiled to the top on foot, and walked about the field till the rain streamed off them in bucketfuls—like so many geese.

The wind, which had been desperately high all day at Dunkerque, increased violently towards the evening; increased with every hour and every minute. The town went to bed at its usual time, but not to sleep: there were few eyes closed in Dunkerque that night, for it was one of terror. Scarcely has a storm of wind been heard more violent. Little children flew shivering into their parents' rooms for protection, as windows were blown in. Heads of families rose, and walked their houses, expecting to see the panes of glass in shatters on the floors.

Those who attempted to sleep got up in the morning from their rocking beds unrefreshed. Bricks were hurled from chimneys, trees torn up by the roots, shutters and windows rent from their fastenings: scarcely, in the remembrance of the oldest inhabitant of Dunkerque, had such a hurricane been known. With the going down of the morning tide, the storm a little abated; but it still blew awfully.

What a sight the unfortunate street decorations presented! It was a scene of desolation. The house-draperies had nearly all disappeared, nobody knew where; a few torn odds and ends were clinging round the chimneys, and flapping away in the wind; the houses were stained blue and red where the draperies had been, for the rain had soaked out their colours; the eagles had come down on the wing; some of the flags fluttered in ribbons, like a furious cat-o'-nine-tails; the leaves were torn off the once lovely green boughs, and were whirling about in the air, thick as a snow storm: whilst the flags looked like a forest of faded leaves in autumn. The festoons were blown to pieces; the greater part of the triumphal arches were destroyed; the much-admired barrel-arch had demolished itself, with a noise and fury seldom heard before, to the excessive terror of the neighbouring houses, who had thought the street was coming down; and the beautiful triumphal arch leading to the park was a heap of ruins, the colossal eagle lying on the ground with its head off, and its gilt wings gone away.

Some of the disasters could not be remedied, for time pressed, and the wind was still in its tantrums, as an English lad phrased it; but all that could be done was done. The rain that day kept off. But the people, from another cause, felt vexed. Dunkerque had gone to an enormous expense; and rumours oozed out that the Imperial pair, instead of remaining a night in the town, dining at the préfecture and "assisting" at the ball, would only stay three hours. The town refused to believe it: but it turned out to be true, nevertheless.

The royal train would arrive at half-past eleven. Long before that hour every window in the line of procession was occupied. Troops in their gay uniforms were pouring up to the railway station, to the music of their fine bands; conspicuous for their attire marched the sapeurs-pompier in their brazen helmets; bodies of decorated men, deputations from the neighbouring towns, followed; the municipal council of Dunkerque loomed by, in all the grandeur of their official robes; walking with them was a lady, decorated with two medals, for services rendered formerly in the town; old soldiers of the Empire; ancient sailors; children of the public institutions: all advanced in order. The Imperial carriages, which had arrived the previous evening, followed in the midst of an escort; and not the least picturesque of the different objects was a deputation of fishwomen, bearing aloft a net, containing a fish made of silver. They were charmingly attired in their peculiar holiday costume, their light, clear-looking caps spotless as snow; in their

gold ornaments, and long pendent ear-rings ; and their dresses, mostly of chintz, looped up in festoons like a court lady's of former times, displayed petticoats of damask moreen, blue, red, and various colours.

The train came in, to the ringing of bells and firing of cannon ; and the Emperor and Empress made their state entrance into the town. It was a gracious act, on that fearfully windy day, to use an open carriage, leaving the close ones to their attendants. Louis Napoleon—sitting low in the carriage, and looking so much *smaller* than the public had pictured him—seemed very cool and quiet ; his beautiful wife bowed repeatedly. She wore a dark silk dress, a warm shawl, and a fancy straw bonnet. The Emperor was in uniform ; and he looked, in his cocked-hat, as unlike the portraits then out of him as he could well look. There was little cheering ; and perhaps that may account for the Emperor's *froid*eur : I think the people were so preoccupied, looking for the Empress, that they did not recollect to cheer ; certainly it was not from lack of loyalty. They proceeded to the sous-préfecture, which was made the Mairie and the Imperial Palais for the day. As the carriage was turning in at its gates, an English lady at an adjoining window called out in her own tongue, "Long live the Emperor !" and Louis Napoleon looked laughingly up, nodded, and bowed.

Meanwhile, the dames and the demoiselles d'honneur had arrived at the sous-préfecture, with numbers of other French ladies, residents of the town, and were waiting to be presented to the Empress. If the stately carriages, attending a court at St. James's, could but have seen the vehicles (omnibuses amid them) brought into requisition for this ! But the poor Empress, completely worn out with all the journeying and the sight-seeing, was much more thankful to repose a little while upon her bed, than to do the honours of a court. The ladies, however, got presented later.

The Emperor, after the presentations to himself were over, quitted the sous-préfecture in his carriage, attended by M. de Paillard the sous-préfet, and went to inspect the Exposition. From thence he proceeded to the port on foot, braving the wind, where he examined the works going on in the harbour. He had no idea previously that the port and town of Dunkerque were of so much size and importance. English ships, American ships, Russian ships, Turkish ships, besides native vessels, crowded the harbour, some three hundred of them, all carrying their national colours. But the Emperor was suddenly interrupted.

The deputation of fishwomen, in their handsome costumes, came up at this moment, more than thirty of them ; and, joining their hands, inclosed his Majesty in the midst of their circle. It is an old custom of the town when honoured with the presence of its sovereign.

"What would you ?" inquired the Emperor, in surprise.

"We would offer to your Majesty's acceptance a silver fish," replied the spokeswoman by right, a portly, black-eyed dame, the "queen" of the fishmarket, producing a pretty silver fish inclosed in a net of gold wire and green silk. The Emperor graciously accepted the offering.

"What next?" he continued, good-humouredly, finding he was not released.

"We hold another custom in Dunkerque, sire," said the bold dame. "Before you can leave the circle, you must embrace me. When your uncle, the Great Napoleon, was here, he followed it. I had the honour of a kiss from him, and I must have the same from you."

What could the Emperor do? He behaved as a gallant emperor ought, and laughingly gave the kiss, amidst the cheers and roars of the multitude around.

"That is not all yet," proceeded the gratified dame. "We wish to see your beautiful Empress. We have a second fish for her. Will your Majesty courteously give the orders for our admission to her at the sous-préfecture?"

The Emperor hesitated; remembering, probably, the fatigue of his wife; but it was only for a moment: and he said the Empress would be happy to comply with their wishes. So away the pêcheuses started to the sous-préfecture.

The Emperor then went to the Belvedere and the ramparts, and gazed abroad. At the magnificent harbour with its rich freight, the ships rocking about as if they were riding at anchor; at the fine old town behind it; and at the roaring sea, extending so far away into the distance, the waves running mountains high. Not a vessel was to be seen at sea. The Cherbourg fleet, signalled to approach the previous evening, was unable to obey, and had been driven towards the Downs. The "*Reine Hortense*" alone was at her post: she had arrived before the boisterous weather set in.

But the fish-ladies had, ere this, found their way to the sous-préfecture, and demanded to see the Empress.

"Impossible!" replied one in authority; "*you* can't see the Empress. And, besides, her Majesty is fatigued, and is lying down."

"We *are* to see her," retorted the spokeswoman. "You cannot act against the orders of the Emperor."

How long the dispute would have held out is uncertain; but the Emperor drove up, and confirmed the women's statement.

"*All* these!" cried a renowned general, looking at the thirty women in dismay. "They will frighten the Impératrice. Could not three or four of them enter, as a deputation from the rest?"

"We don't understand anything about your deputations," interrupted the indignant ladies; "we have come to see our sovereign, with his Majesty's permission, and we mean to see her." And, elbowing their way right and left, through generals, officers, préfets, and staff, they

marched up to the audience-chamber ; and from thence were admitted into the presence of the Emperor and Empress.

Their greetings of her Majesty were far more in accordance with the laws of hearty good-will than with those of etiquette. They pushed up and danced about her, full of praises and admiration. The Empress would fain have danced too, and nearly did ; she was almost as delighted as they were, and laughed and enjoyed the scene like a happy young girl. "O comme t'es belle ! comme t'es belle !" uttered they, in their familiar patois.

"It is a pretty present," exclaimed her Majesty, accepting the silver fish, and playing with it. "How frequently, pray, do you catch this sort of fish ?" she asked, smiling.

"Just as often as your Majesty comes to Dunkerque," was the prompt reply. "Comme tu es bellotte, mon Impé'trice !" uttered their bold and joking leader : "tu es vraiment bellotte : et je te souhaite un gros garçon !"

The Empress laughed, a ringing laugh ; the Emperor joined in heartily ; and the women, laughing in concert, retired : the Empress ordering them 1000 francs.

Meanwhile, as many as could push in had collected in the cathedral, where a body of priests waited in state for their sovereign ; the church being decorated inside, and its entrance-doors hung with crimson velvet. But while they waited and waited, thinking his Majesty was a long while coming, the hour struck half-past two, and a loud discharge of cannon announced the unwelcome fact that the Imperial couple had left the town again on their route to Calais, without going near the church at all ; and leaving their warm thanks for the manner in which they had been welcomed in Dunkerque.

The ball took place in the evening : but the French ladies asserted that it was "pénible" to see the dais and the two fauteuils unoccupied. There was many a pretty woman there, many a pretty girl ; some of the toilettes were exquisite, and the uniforms, civil and military, glittered in all parts of the throng. The quadrille d'honneur was formed as well as it could be formed, for the crowd ; the sous-préfet taking the first place, in the absence of his Majesty.

Tuesday morning rose beautifully ; the wind having greatly abated. The street decorations had been remodelled and replenished, and countless numbers of coloured lamps were hung, to be illumined at night. An estrade was erected on the Place Jean Bart, all lamps and flags and festoons of flowers and evergreens, intended for the arena of the trial of skill in music. The bands of Dunkerque and of the neighbouring communes assembled, each performing two pieces, chosen at will, and a prize was presented to the band adjudged the best.

With dusk the streets were lighted up ; the illuminations also were general ; they had been only partially so the previous night, on

account of the tempest. A prize was given to the most tastily decorated of the streets. It presented more the appearance of a grove at Vauxhall in old times than a street, so profuse were its evergreens and its clusters of many-coloured lamps; whilst at its extreme end the eye, roaming through verdant arcades, caught a view of the ancient Couvent des Pénitentes brilliantly lighted up. Never in England could we see such a sight as was presented that night by the streets of Dunkerque, for the English do not understand these things.

The fireworks cost 8000 francs, and were let off on the Place Jean Bart. They were indeed magnificent. The air was filled with balls of the most brilliant and varied colours; showers of golden rain; jets of silver. Ere one device had faded away in a succession of ever-changing wonders, another broke forth. Now, would be discovered the letter N, stationary in the midst of revolving stars and prisms of vivid brilliancy; as you looked, the letter dissolved itself into E: here would be shining forth a resplendent crown; there, towering aloft, the Imperial eagle: and the last scene, the "bouquet" rising into the air, and almost seeming to touch the pale stars of ANOTHER hemisphere, was a sight worth remembering for ever.

May the Emperor and Empress come again to Dunkerque! was the aspiration in everybody's mouth: never mind the money.

But they never did come again. And now he, that kindly hearted man, who had ever a good word for England, has passed away to a Kingdom where pomps and vanities, despair and poverty are not; where vicissitudes cannot enter; and where time and change shall be no more.

Peace be with him!

January, 1873.



A CRISIS IN HIS LIFE.

LUNCH-TIME at Oxford, and a sunny day. Instead of college and our usual fare, bread-and-cheese from the buttery, we were looking on the High Street from Mrs. Every's rooms, and about to sit down to a snow-white damasked table with no end of good things upon it. Madam Sophie had invited four or five of us to lunch with her.

The term had gone on, and Easter was not far off. Tod had not worked much: just enough to keep him out of hot-water. His mind ran on Sophie Chalk more than it did on lectures and chapel. He and the other fellows who were caught by her fascinations mostly spent their spare time there. Sophie dispersed her smiles pretty equally, but Tod contrived to get the largest share. The difference was this: they had lost their heads to her and Tod his heart. The evening card-playing did not flag and the stakes played for were high. Tod and Gaiton were the general losers: a run of ill-luck had set in from the first for both of them. Gaiton might afford this, but Tod could not.

Tod had his moments of reflection. He'd sit sometimes for an hour together, his head bent down, whistling softly to himself some slow dolorous strain, and pulling at his dark whiskers; no doubt pondering the question of what was to be the upshot of it all. For my part, I devoutly wished Sophie Chalk had been caught up into the moon before an ill-wind had wafted her to Oxford. It was an awful shame of her husband to let her stay on there, turning the undergraduates' brains. Perhaps he could not help it.

We sat down to table: Sophie at its head in a fresh-looking pink gown and bracelets and nicknacks. Lord Gaiton and Tod sat on either side of her; Richardson was at the foot, and Fred Temple and I faced each other. What fit of politeness had taken Sophie to invite me, I could not imagine. Possibly she thought I should be sure to refuse; but I did not.

"So kind of you all to honour my poor little table!" said Sophie, as we sat down. "Being in lodgings, I cannot treat you as I should wish. It is all cold: chickens, meat patties, lobster salad, and bread-and-cheese. Lord Gaiton, this is sherry by you, I think. Mr. Richardson, you like porter, I know: there is some on the chiffonier."

We plunged into the dishes without ceremony, each one according to his taste, and the lunch progressed. I may as well mention one thing—that there was nothing in Mrs. Every's manners at any time to take exception at: never a word was heard from her, never a look seen, that could offend even an old dowager. She made the most of her charms

and her general fascinations, and flirted quietly ; but all in a lady-like way.

"Thank you, yes ; I think I will take a little more salad, Mr. Richardson," she said to him with a beaming smile. "It is my dinner, you know. I have not a hall to dine in to-night, as you gentlemen have. I am sorry to trouble you, Mr. Johnny."

I was holding her plate for Richardson. There happened at that moment to be a lull in the talking, and we heard a carriage of some kind stop at the door, and a loud peal at the house-bell.

"It's that brother of mine," said Fred Temple. "He bothered me to drive out to some confounded place with him, but I told him I'd not. What's he bumping up the stairs in that fashion for?"

The room door was flung open, and Fred Temple put on a savage face, for his brother looked after him more than he liked ; when, instead of Temple major, there appeared a shining big brown satin bonnet, and an old lady's face under it, who stood there with a walking-stick.

"Yes, you see I was right, grandmamma ; I said she was not gone," piped out a shrill voice behind ; and Mabel Smith, in an old-fashioned black silk frock and tippet, came into view. They had driven up to look after Sophie.

Sophie was equal to the occasion. She rose gracefully and held out both her hands, as though they had been welcome as is the sun in harvest. The old lady leaned on her stick, and stared around : the many faces seemed to confuse her.

"Dear me ! I did not know you had got a party to dinner, ma'am."

"Just two or three friends who have dropped in to partake of a little luncheon, Mrs. Golding," said Sophie, airily. "Let me take your stick."

The old lady, who looked like a very amiable old lady, sat down in the nearest chair, but kept the stick in her hand. Mabel Smith was regarding everything with her shrewd eyes and compressing her thin lips.

"This is Johnny Ludlow, grandmamma ; you have heard me speak of him : I don't know the others."

"How do you do, sir," said the old lady, politely nodding her brown bonnet at me. "I hope you are in good health, sir?"

"Yes, ma'am, thank you." For she put it as a question, and seemed to await an answer. Tod and the rest, who had risen, began to sit down again.

"I'm sure I am sorry to disturb you at dinner, ma'am," said the old lady to Mrs. Every. "We came in to see whether you had gone home or not. I said you of course had gone ; that you'd not stay away from your husband so long as this ; and also because we had not heard of you for a month past. But Mabel thought you were here still."

"I am intending to return shortly," said Sophie.

"That's well : for I want to send up Mabel. And I brought in a letter

that came to my house this morning, addressed to you," continued the old lady, lugging out of her pocket a small collection of articles before she found the letter. "Mabel says it is your husband's hand writing, ma'am; if so, he must be thinking you are staying with me."

"Thanks," said Sophie, slipping the letter away unopened.

"Had you not better see what it says?" suggested Mrs. Golding to her.

"Not at all: it can wait. May I offer you some luncheon?"

"Much obleeged, ma'am, but I and Mabel took an early dinner before setting out—some hot mutton-chops. And on which day, Mrs. Every, do you purpose going?"

"I'll let you know," said Sophie.

"What can have kept you so long here?" continued the old lady, wonderingly. "Mabel said you did not know any of the inhabitants."

"I have found it of service to my health," replied Sophie with charming simplicity. "Will you take a glass of sherry, Mrs. Golding?"

"I don't mind if I do. Just half a glass. Thank you, sir; not much more than half"—to me, as I went forward with the glass and decanter. "I'm sure, sir, it is good of you to be attentive to an old lady like me. If you had a mind for a brisk walk at any time, of three miles, or so, and would come over to my house, I'd make you welcome. Mabel, write down the address."

"And I wish you had come while I was there, Johnny Ludlow," said the girl, giving me the paper. "I like you. You don't say smiling words to people with your mouth and mock at them in your heart, as some do."

I remembered that she had not been asked to take any wine, and I offered it.

"No, thank you," she said with emphasis. "None for me." And it struck me that she refused because the wine belonged to Sophie.

The old lady, after nodding a farewell around and shaking hands with Mrs. Every, stood leaning on her stick between the doorway and the stairs. "My servant's not here," she said, looking back, "and these stairs are steep: would anybody be good enough to help me down?"

Tod went forward to give her his arm; and we heard the fly drive away with her and Mabel. Somehow the interlude had damped the free go of the banquet, and we soon prepared to depart also. Sophie made no attempt to hinder it, but said she should expect us in to take some tea with her in the evening: and the lot of us filed out together, some going one way, some another. I and Fred Temple kept together.

There was a good-natured fellow at Oxford that term, who had come up from Wales to take his degree, and had brought his wife with him, a nice kind of young girl who put me in mind of Anna Whitney. They had become acquainted with Sophie Chalk, and liked her; she fascinated both. She meant to do it too: for the companionship of staid, irre-

proachable people like Mr. and Mrs. Ap-Jenkyns, reflected credit on herself in the eyes of Oxford.

"I thought we should have met the Ap-Jenkynses, at lunch," remarked Temple. "What a droll old party that was with the stick! She put me in mind of—I say, here's another old party!" he broke off. "Seems to be a friend of yours."

It was Mrs. Cann. She had stopped, evidently wanting to speak to me.

"I have just been to put little Nanny Tasson in the train for London, sir," she said; "I thought you might like to know it. Her eldest brother, the one that's settled there, has taken to her. His wife wrote a nice letter and sent the fare."

"All right, Mrs. Cann. I hope they'll take good care of her. Good-afternoon."

"Who the wonder is Nanny Tasson?" cried Temple as we went on.

"Only a little friendless child. Her brother was our scout when we first came, and he died."

"Oh, by Jove, Ludlow! Look there!"

I turned at Temple's words. A gig was dashing by as large as life; Tod in it, driving Sophie Chalk. Behind it dashed another gig, containing Mr. and Mrs. Ap-Jenkyns. Fred Temple laughed.

"Mrs. Every's unmistakably charming," said he, "and we don't know any real harm of her, but if I were Ap-Jenkyns I should not let my wife be quite her bosom companion. As to Todhetley, I think he's a gone calf."

Whitney came to our room as I got in. He had been invited to the luncheon by Mrs. Every, but excused himself, and she asked Fred Temple in his place.

"Well, Johnny, how did it go off?"

"Oh, pretty well. Lobster-salad and other good things. Why did not you go?"

"Where's Tod?" he rejoined, not answering the question.

"Out on a driving-party. Sophie Chalk and the Ap-Jenkynses."

Whitney whistled through the verse of an old song: "Froggy would a-woooing go." "I say, Johnny," he said presently, "you had better give Tod a hint to take care of himself. That thing will go too far if he does not look out."

"As if Tod would mind me! Give him the hint yourself, Bill."

"I said half a word to him this morning after chapel: he turned on me and accused me of being jealous."

We both laughed.

"I got a letter from home yesterday," Bill went on. "Ordering me to keep clear of Madam Sophie."

"No! Who from?"

"The mother. And Miss Deveen, who is staying with them, put in a postscript."

"How did they know Sophie Chalk was here?"

"Through me. One wet afternoon I wrote a long epistle to Harry, telling him, amidst other items, that Sophie Chalk was here, turning some of our heads, especially Todhetley's. Harry, like a flat, let Helen get hold of the letter, and she read it aloud, *pro bono publico*. There was nothing in it that I might not have written to Helen herself; but Mr. Harry won't get another from me in a hurry. Sophie seems to have fallen to a discount with the mother and Miss Deveen."

Bill Whitney did not know what I knew—the true story of the emeralds.

"And that's why I did not go to the lunch to-day, Johnny. Who's this?"

It was the scout. He came in to bring in a small parcel, daintily done up in white paper.

"Something for you, sir," he said to me. "A boy has just left it."

"It can't be for me—that I know of. It looks like wedding-cake."

"Open it," said Bill. "Perhaps one of the grads has gone and got married."

We opened it together, laughing. A tiny pasteboard box loomed out with a jeweller's name on it; inside it was a chased gold cross, attached to a slight gold chain.

"It's a mistake, Bill. I'll do it up again."

Tod came back in time for dinner. Seeing the little parcel on the mantel-shelf, he asked what it was. So I told him—something that the jeweller's shop must have sent to our room by mistake. Upon that, he tore the paper open; called the shop people hard names for sending it into college, and put the box in his pocket. Which showed that it was for him.

I went to Sophie's in the evening, having promised her, but not as soon as Tod, for I stayed to finish some Greek. Whitney went with me, in spite of his orders from home. The luncheon party had all assembled there with the addition of Mr. and Mrs. Ap-Jenkyns. Sophie sat behind the tea-tray, dispensing her tea; Gaiton handed the plum-cake. She wore a silken robe of opal tints; white lace fell over her wrists and bracelets; in her hair, brushed off her face, fluttered a butterfly with silver wings; and on her neck was the chased gold cross that had come to our rooms a few hours before.

"Tod's just a fool, Johnny," said Whitney in my ear. "Upon my word, I think he is. And she's a syren!—and it was at our house he met her first!"

After Mr. and Mrs. Ap-Jenkyns left, for she was tired, they began cards. Sophie was engrossing Gaiton, and Tod sat down to *écarté*. He refused at first, but Richardson drew him on.

"I'll show Tod the letter I had from home," said Whitney to me as we went out. "What can possess him to go and buy gold crosses for her? She's married."

"Gaiton and Richardson buy her things also, Bill."

"They don't know how to spend their money fast enough. I wouldn't: I know that."

Tod and Gaiton came in together soon after I got in. Gaiton just looked in to say good-night, and proposed that we should breakfast with him on the morrow, saying he'd ask Whitney also: and then he went up to his own rooms.

Tod fell into one of his thinking fits. He had work to do, but he sat staring at the fire, his legs stretched out. With all his carelessness he had a conscience and some forethought. I told him Bill Whitney had had a lecture from home, touching Sophie Chalk, and I conclude he heard. But he made no sign.

"I wish to *goodness* you'd not keep up that tinkling, Johnny," he said by-and-by, in a tone of irritation.

The "tinkling" was a bit of quiet harmony. However, I shut down the piano, and went and sat by the fire, opposite to him. His brow looked troubled; he was running his hands through his hair.

"I wonder whether I could raise some money, Johnny," he began, after a bit.

"How much money?"

"A hundred, or so."

"You'd have to pay a hundred and fifty for doing it."

"Confound it, yes! And besides——"

"Besides what?"

"Nothing."

"Look here, Tod: we should have gone on as straightly and steadily as need be but for *her*. As it is, you are wasting your time and getting out of the way of work. What's going to be the end of it?"

"Don't know myself, Johnny."

"Do you ever ask yourself?"

"Where's the use of asking?" he returned, after a pause. "If I ask it of myself at night, I forget it by the morning."

"Pull up at once, Tod. You'd be in time."

"Yes, now: don't know that I shall be much longer," said Tod candidly. He was in a soft mood that night; an unusual thing with him. "Some awful complication may come of it: a few writs or something."

"Sophie Chalk can't do you any good, Tod."

"She has not done me any harm."

"Yes she has. She has unsettled you from the work that you came to Oxford to do; and the play in her rooms has caused you to run into debt that you don't know how to get out of: it's nearly as much harm as she can do you."

"Is it?"

"As much as she can do any honest fellow. Tod, if you were to

lapse into crooked paths, you'd break the good old Pater's heart. There's nobody in the world he cares for as he cares for you."

Tod sat twitching his whiskers. I could not understand his mood : all the carelessness and the fierceness had quite gone out of him.

"It's the thought of the father that pulls me up, lad. What a cross-grained world it is ! Why should a bit of pleasure be hedged in with thorns ?"

"If we don't go to bed we shall not be up for chapel."

"You can go to bed."

"Why do you drive her out, Tod ?"

"Why does the sun shine ?" was the lucid answer.

"I saw you with her in that gig to-day."

"We only went four miles. Four out and four in."

"You may be driving her rather too far some day—fourteen, or so."

"I don't think she'd be driven. With all her simplicity, she knows how to take care of herself."

Simplicity ! I looked at him ; and saw he spoke the word in good faith. *He* was simple.

"She has got a husband, Tod."

"Well ?"

"Do you suppose he would like to see you driving her abroad ?—and all you fellows in her rooms to the last minute any of you dare stop out ?"

"That's not my affair. It's his."

"Any way, Every might come down upon the lot of you some of these fine days, and say things you'd not like. *She's* to blame. Why, you heard what that old lady in the brown bonnet said—that her husband must think Sophie was staying with her."

"The fire's low, and I'm cold," said Tod. "Good-night, Johnny."

He went into his room, and I to mine.

A few years ago, there appeared a short poem called "*Amor Mundi*."* While reading it, I involuntarily recalled this past experience at Oxford, for it described a young fellow's setting-out on the downward path, as Tod did. Two of life's wayfarers start on their long life journey : the woman first ; the man sees and joins her ; then speaks to her.

"Oh, where are you going, with your love-locks flowing,
And the west wind blowing along the narrow track ?"

"This downward path is easy, come with me, an' it please ye ;
We shall escape the up-hill by never turning back."

So they two went together in the sunny August weather ;
The honey-blooming heather hay to the left and right :

And dear she was to dote on, her small feet seemed to float on
The air, like soft twin-pigeons too sportive to alight.

And so they go forth, these two, on their journey, revelling in the

summer sunshine and giving no heed to their sliding progress ; until he sees something in the path that startles him. But the syren accounts for it in some plausible way ; it lulls his fear, and onward they go again. In time he sees something worse, halts, and asks her again :

“ Oh, what’s that in the hollow, so pale I quake to follow ? ”

“ Oh that’s a thin dead body that waits the Eternal term. ”

The answer effectually arouses him, and he pulls up in terror, asking her to turn. She answers again, and he knows his fate.

“ Turn again, oh my sweetest ! Turn again, false and fleetest !

This way, whereof thou weetest, is surely Hell’s own track ! ”

“ Nay, too late for cost counting, nay too steep for hill-mounting,

This downward path is easy, but there’s no turning back. ”

Shakspeare tells us that there is a tide in the affairs of man, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune : omitted, all the voyage of the after life is spent in shoals and miseries. That will apply to other things besides fortune. I fully believe that after a young fellow has set out on the downward path, in almost all cases there’s a chance given him of pulling up again, if he only is but sufficiently wise and firm to seize upon it. The opportunity was to come for Tod. He had started ; there was no doubt of that ; but he had not got down very far yet and could go backward almost as easily as forward. Left alone, he would probably make a sliding run of it, and descend in the shoals. But the chance for him was at hand.

Our commons and Whitney’s went up to Gaiton’s room in the morning, and we breakfasted there. Lecture that day was at eleven, but I had work to do beforehand. So had Tod, for the matter of that ; plenty of it. I went down to mine, but Tod stayed up with the two others.

Bursting into our room, as a fellow does when he is late for anything, I saw at the open window somebody that I thought must be Mr. Brandon’s ghost. It took me aback, and for a moment I stood staring.

“ Have you no greeting for me, Johnny Ludlow ? ”

“ I was lost in surprise, sir. I am very glad to see you. ”

“ I daresay you are ! ” he returned, as if he doubted my word. “ It’s a good half-hour that I have waited here. You’ve been at a breakfast party ! ”

He must have got that from the scout. “ Not at a party, sir. Gaiton asked us to take our commons up, and breakfast with him in his room. ”

“ Who is Gaiton ? ”

“ He is Lord Gaiton. One of the students at Christchurch. ”

“ Never mind his being a lord. Is he any good ? ”

I could not say Gaiton was particularly good, so passed the question over, and asked Mr. Brandon when he came to Oxford.

“ I got here at mid-day yesterday. How are you getting on ? ”

"Oh very well, sir."

"Been in any rows?"

"No, sir."

"And Todhetley? How is he getting on?"

I should have said very well to this; it would never have done to say very ill, but Tod and Bill Whitney interrupted the answer. They looked just as much surprised as I had been. After talking a bit, Mr. Brandon left, saying he should expect us all three at the Mitre in the evening when dinner in Hall was over.

"What the deuce brings him at Oxford?" cried Tod.

Whitney laughed. "I'll lay a crown he has come to look after Johnny and his morals."

"After the lot of us," added Tod, pushing his books about. "Look here, you two. I'm not obliged to go bothering to that Mitre in the evening, and I shan't. You'll be enough without me."

"It won't do, Tod," I said. "He expects you."

"What if he does? I have an engagement elsewhere."

"Break it."

"I shall not do anything of the kind. There! Hold your tongue, Johnny, and push the ink this way."

Tod held to that. So when I and Whitney reached the Mitre after dinner, we said he was unable to get off a previous engagement, putting the excuse as politely as we could.

"Oh," said old Brandon, twitching his yellow silk handkerchief off his head, for he had been asleep before the fire. "Engaged elsewhere, is he! With the lady I saw him driving out yesterday, I suppose: a person with blue feathers on her head."

This struck us dumb. Bill said nothing, neither did I.

"It was a Miss Sophie Chalk, I presume," went on old Brandon, ringing the bell. "Sit down, boys; we'll have tea up."

The tea and coffee must have been ordered before-hand, for they came in at once. Mr. Brandon drank four cups of tea, and ate a plate of bread-and-butter and some watercress.

"Tea is my best meal in the day," he said. "You young fellows all like coffee best. Don't spare it. What's that by you, William Whitney?—anchovy toast? Cut that pound-cake, Johnny."

Nobody could say, with all his strict notions, that Mr. Brandon was not hospitable. He'd have ordered up the Mitre's whole larder had he thought we could eat it. And never another word did he say about Tod until the things had gone away.

Then he began, quietly at first: he sitting on one side the fire, I and Bill on the other. Touching gently on this, alluding to that, our eyes opened in more senses than one; for we found that he knew all about Sophie Chalk's sojourn in the town, the attention she received from the undergraduates, and Tod's infatuation.

"What's Todhetley's object in going there?" he asked.

"Amusement, I think, sir," hazarded Bill.

"Does he gamble there for amusement too?"

Where on earth had old Brandon got hold of all this?

"How much has Todhetley lost already?" he continued. "He is in debt, I know. Not for the first time from the same cause."

Bill stared. He knew nothing of that old episode in London with the Clement-Pells. I felt my face flush.

"Tod does not care for playing really, sir. But the cards are there, and he sees others play and gets drawn-in to join."

"Well, what amount has he lost this time, Johnny?"

"I don't know, sir."

"But you know that he is in debt?"

"I—yes, sir. Perhaps he is a little."

"Look here, boys," said old Brandon. "Believing that matters were not running in a satisfactory groove with some of you, I came down to Oxford yesterday to look about me a bit—for I don't intend that Johnny Ludlow shall lapse into bad ways, if I can keep him out of them. Todhetley may have made up his mind to go to the deuce, but he shall not take Johnny with him. I hear no good report of Todhetley; he neglects his studies for the sake of a witch, and is in debt over his head and shoulders."

"Who could have told you that, sir?"

"Never you mind, Johnny Ludlow; I daresay you know it's pretty true. Now look here—as I said just now. I mean to see what I can do towards saving Todhetley, for the sake of my good old friend, the Squire, and for his dead mother's sake; and I appeal to you both to aid me. You can answer my questions if you will; and you are not children, that you should make an evasive pretence of ignorance. If I find matters are too hard for me to cope with, I shall send for the Squire and Sir John Whitney; their influence may effect what mine cannot. If I can deal with the affair successfully, and save Todhetley from himself, I'll do so, and say nothing about it anywhere. You understand me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. To begin with, what amount of debt has Todhetley got into?"

It seemed to be a choice of evils: but the least of them was to speak. Bill honestly said he would tell in a minute if he knew. I knew little more than he; only that Tod had been saying the night before he wished he could raise a hundred pounds.

"A hundred pounds!" repeated old Brandon, nodding his head a dozen times like a Chinese mandarin. "Pretty well, that, for a first term at Oxford. Well, we'll leave that for the present, and go to other questions. What snare and delusion is drawing him on to make

visits to this person, this Sophie Chalk? What does he purpose? Is it marriage?"

Marriage! Bill and I both looked up at him.

"She is married already, sir. Did you not know it?"

"Married already! Who says so?"

So I told him all about it—as much as I knew—and that her husband, Mr. Every, had been to Oxford once or twice to see her.

"Well, that's a relief," cried Mr. Brandon, drawing a deep breath, as though a fear of some kind had been lifted from his mind. And then he fell into a reverie, his head nodding incessantly, and his yellow handkerchief in his hand keeping time to it.

"If it's better in one sense, it's worse in another," he squeaked. "Todhetley's in love with her, I suppose!"

"Something like it, sir," said Bill.

"What brainless fools some of you young men can be!"

But it was then on the stroke of nine, when Old Tom would peal out. Mr. Brandon hurried us away: he seemed to understand the notions of University life as well as we did: ordering us to say nothing to Tod, as he intended to speak to him on the morrow.

And we concluded that he did. Tod came stalking in during the afternoon in a white rage with somebody, and I thought it might be with old Brandon.

The time passed. Mr. Brandon stayed on at the Mitre as though he meant to make it his home for good, and was evidently watching. Tod seemed to be conscious of it, and to exist in a chronic state of irritation. Sophie Chalk stayed on also, and Tod was there more than ever. The affair had got wind somehow—I mean Tod's infatuation for her—and was talked of in the colleges. Richardson fell ill about that time: at least, he met with an accident which confined him to his bed: and the play at Mrs. Every's was not much to speak of: I did not go, Mr. Brandon had interdicted it. Thus the time went on, and Passion Week was coming in.

"Are you running for a wager, Johnny Ludlow?"

I was running down to the river and had nearly run over Mr. Brandon, who was strolling along with his hands under his coat-tails. It was Saturday afternoon, and some of us were going out rowing. Mr. Brandon came down to see us embark.

As we all stood there, who should loom into sight but Sophie Chalk! She was leading a little mouse-coloured dog by a piece of red tape; one that Fred Temple had given her; and her shining hair was a sight to be seen in the sunlight; Tod walked by her with his arms folded. They halted to talk with some of us for a minute, and then went on, Madam Sophie giving old Brandon a saucy stare from her wide-open blue eyes. He had stood as still as a post, giving never a word to either of them.

That same night, when Tod and I were in our room alone, Mr. Brandon walked in. It was pretty late, but Tod was about to depart on his visit to High Street. As if the entrance of Mr. Brandon had been the signal for him to bolt, he put on his trencher and turned to the door. Quick as thought, Mr. Brandon interposed himself.

"If you go out of this room, Joseph Todhetley, it shall be over my body," cried he, a whole hatful of authority in his squeaky voice. "I have come in to hold a final conversation with you; and I mean to do it."

I thought an explosion was inevitable, with Tod's temper. He controlled it, however; and after a moment's hesitation put off his cap. Mr. Brandon sat down in the old big chair by the fire; Tod stood on the other side, his arm on the mantelpiece.

In a minute or two, they were going at it kindly. Old Brandon put Tod's doings before him in the plainest language he could command; Tod retorted insolently in his passion.

"I have warned you enough against your ways and against that woman," said Mr. Brandon. "I am here to do it once again, and to bid you for the last time give up her acquaintanceship. Yes, sir, *bid* you: I stand in the light of your unconscious father."

"I'd not do it for my father," cried Tod, in his fury.

"She is leading you into a gulf of—of brimstone," fired old Brandon. "Day by day you creep down a step lower into it, sir, like a calf that is being wiled to the shambles. Once fairly in, you'll be smothered: the whole world won't be able to pull you out again."

Tod answered with a torrent of words. The chief burden of them was—that if he chose to walk into the brimstone, it was not Mr. Brandon who should keep him out of it.

"Is it not?" retorted Mr. Brandon—and though he was very firm and hard, he gave no sign of losing his temper. "We'll see that. I am in this town to strive to save you, Joseph Todhetley; and if I can't do it by easy means, I'll do it by hard ones. I got you out of one scrape, thanks to Johnny here, and now I'm going to get you out of another."

Tod held his peace. That past obligation was often on his conscience.

"You ought to take shame to yourself, sir," continued old Brandon. "You were placed at Oxford to study, to learn to be a man and a gentleman, to prepare yourself to fight well the battle of life, not to waste the talents God has given you, and fritter away your best days in sin."

"In sin?" retorted Tod, jerking his head fiercely.

"Yes, sir, in sin. What else do you call it—this idleness that you are indulging in? The short space of time that young men spend at the University must be used, not abused. Once it has passed, it can never again be laid hold of. What sort of example are you setting my ward here, who is as your younger brother?—Stay where you are, Johnny Ludlow. I choose that you shall be present at this."

"Johnny need not fret himself that he'll catch much harm from my iniquities," said Tod with a sneer.

"Now listen to me, young man," spoke Mr. Brandon. "If you persist in this insane conduct and refuse to hear reason, I'll keep you out of danger by putting you in prison."

Tod stared.

"You owe me a hundred pounds."

"I am quite conscious of that, sir : and of my inability hitherto to repay it."

"For that debt I will shut you up in prison. Headstrong young idiots like you must be saved from themselves."

Tod laughed slightly in his insolence. A defiant, mocking laugh.

"I should like to see you try to shut me up in prison ! You have no power to do it, Mr. Brandon : you have never proved the debt."

Mr. Brandon rose, and took a step towards him. "You dare to tell *me* I cannot do a thing that I say I will do, Joseph Todhetley ! I shall make an affidavit before a judge in chambers that you are about to leave the country, and obtain the warrant that will lock you up. And I say to you that I believe you are going to leave it, sooner or later ; and that Chalk woman with you !"

"What an awful lie," cried Tod, his face all ablaze.

"Lie or no lie, I believe it. I believe it is what she will bring you to, unless you are speedily separated from her. And if there be no other way of saving you, why, I'll save you by force."

Tod ran his hands through his damp hair : what with wrath and emotion he was in a fine heat. Knowing nothing of the law himself, he supposed old Brandon could do as he said, and it sobered him.

"I am your father's friend, Joseph Todhetley, and I'll take care of you for his sake if I can. I have stayed on here, putting myself, as it were, into his place to save him pain. As his substitute, I have a right to be heard ; ay, and to act. Do you know that your dead mother was very dear to me ? I will tell you what perhaps I never should have told you but for this crisis in your life, that her sister was to me the dearest friend a man can have in this life ; she would have been my wife but that death claimed her. Your mother was nearly equally dear, and loved me to the last. She took my hand in dying, and spoke of you ; of you, her only child. 'Should it ever be in your power to shield him from harm or evil, do so, John,' she said, 'do it for my sake.' And with Heaven's help, I will do it now."

Tod was moved. The mention of his mother softened him at all times. Mr. Brandon sat down again.

"Don't let us play at this pitched battle, Joe. Hear a bit of truth from me, of common sense : can't you see that I have your interest at heart ? There are two roads that lie before a young man on his setting out in life, either of which he can take : you can take either, even yet.

The one leads to honour, to prosperity, to a clear conscience, to a useful career, to a hale and happy old age—and, let us hope, to heaven. The other leads to vice, to discomfort, to miserable self-torment, to a waste of talent and energies ; in short, to altogether a lost life. Lost, at any rate, for this world : and—we'll not speculate upon what it may be in the other. Are you attending?"

Tod just lifted his eyes in answer. I sat at the table by my books, silently turning some of their leaves, ready to drop through the floor with annoyance. Mr. Brandon resumed.

"You have come to the Oxford University to perfect your education ; to acquire self-reliance, experience, and a tone of good manners ; to keep upright ways, to eschew bad company, and to train yourself to be a Christian gentleman. Do this, and you will go home with satisfaction and a sound conscience. In time you will marry, and rear your children to good, and be respected of all men. This is the career expected of you ; this is the road you ought to take."

He paused slightly, and then went on.

"I will put the other road before you ; the one you seem so eager to rush upon. Ah, boy ! how many a one, with as hopeful a future before him as you have, has gone sliding, sliding down unconsciously, never meaning, poor fellow, to slide too far, and been lost in the vortex of sin and shame ! You are starting on well for it. Wine and cards, and betting, and debt ; and a singing mermaid to lure you on ! That woman, with the hard light eyes, and the seductive airs, has cast her spell upon you. You think her an angel no doubt ; I say she's more of an angel's opposite ——"

"Mr. Brandon !"

"There are women in the world who will conjure a man's coat off his back, and his pockets after it," persisted Mr. Brandon, drowning the interruption. "She is one. They are bad to the core. They are ; and they draw a man into all kinds of irretrievable entanglements. She will draw you : and the end may be that you'd find her saddled on you for good. Who will care to take your hand in friendship then ? Will you dare to clasp that of honest people, or hold up your face in the light of day ? No : not for very shame. That's what gambling and evil courses will bring a man to : and, his self-respect once gone, it's gone for ever. You will feel that you have raised a barrier between you and your kind : remembrance will be a sting, and your days will be spent in one long cry of too late repentance, 'Oh, that I had been wise in time !'"

"You are altogether mistaken in her," burst out Tod. "There's no harm in her. She is as particular as—as any lady need be."

"No harm in her !" retorted Mr. Brandon. "Is there any good in her ? Put it at its best : she induces you to waste your time and your substance. How much money has the card-playing and the present-

giving taken out of you, pray? What amount of debt has it involved you in? More than you know how to pay."

Tod winced.

"Be wise in time, lad, now, without further delay, and break off this dangerous connection. I know that in your better moments you must see how fatal it may become. It is a crisis in your life; it may be its turning point; and, as you choose the evil or the good, so may you be lost or saved in this world and in eternity."

Tod muttered something about his not deserving to be judged so harshly.

"I judge you not harshly yet: I say that evil will come unless you flee from it," said Mr. Brandon. "Don't you care for yourself?—for your good name? Is it nothing to you whether you turn out a scamp or a gentleman?"

To look at Tod just then, it was a great deal.

"Have you any reverence for your father?—for the memory of your mother? Then you will do a little violence to your own inclinations, even though it be hard and difficult—more difficult than to get a double first; harder than having the worst tooth in your head drawn—and take your leave of that lady for ever. For your own sake, Joe; for your own sake!"

Tod was pulling gently at his whiskers.

"Send all folly to the wind, Joseph Todhetley! Say to yourself, for God and myself will I strive henceforth! It only needs a little steady resolution; and you can call it up if you choose. You shall always find a friend in me. Write down on a bit of paper the sums you owe, and I'll give you a cheque to cover them. Come, shake hands upon it."

"You are very kind, sir," gasped Tod, letting his hand meet old Brandon's.

"I hope you will let me be kind. Why, lad, you should have had more spirit than to renew an acquaintanceship with a false girl; an adventurer, who has gone about the country stealing jewels."

"Stealing jewels!" echoed Tod.

"Stealing jewels, lad. Did you never know it? She took Miss Deveen's emeralds at Whitney Hall."

"Oh, that was a mistake," said Tod, cheerfully. "She explained it to me."

"A mistake, was it! Explained it to you, did she! When?"

"At Oxford: before she had been here above a day or two. She introduced the subject herself, sir, saying she supposed I had heard something about it, and what an absurd piece of business the suspecting her was; altogether a mistake."

"Ah, she's a wily one, Joe," said Mr. Brandon. "Johnny Ludlow could have told you whether it was a mistake or not. Why, boy, she stole the stones out of Miss Deveen's own dressing-room, and went up

to London the next day, or the next but one, and pledged them the same night at a pawnbroker's, in a false name, and gave a false account of herself. Moreover, when it was brought home to her, she confessed all upon her knees to Miss Deveen, and sued for mercy."

Tod looked from Mr. Brandon to me. At the time of the discovery, he had had a hint given him of the fact, with a view of more effectually weaning him from Sophie Chalk, but not the particulars.

"It's true, Todhetley," said Mr. Brandon, nodding his head. "You may judge, therefore, whether she is a nice kind of person for you to be seen beaung about Oxford streets in the face and eyes of the Dons." And Tod winced again, and bit his lips.

Mr. Brandon rose, taking both Tod's hands in his, and said a few solemn words in the kindest tone I had ever heard him speak; wrung his hands, nodded good-night to me, and was gone. Tod walked about the room a bit, whistling softly to make a show of indifference, and looking miserably cut up.

"Is what he said true?" he asked me presently, stopping by the mantelpiece again: "about the emeralds?"

"Every word of it."

"Then why on earth could you not open your mouth and tell me, Johnny Ludlow?"

"I thought you knew it. I'm sure you were told of it at the time. Had I brought up the matter again later, you'd have been fit to punch me into next week, Tod."

"Let's hear the details—shortly."

I went over them all; shortly, as he said; but omitting none. Tod stood in silence, never once interrupting.

"Did the Whitneys know of this?"

"Anna did."

"Anna!"

"Yes. Anna had suspected Sophie from the first. She saw her steal out of Miss Deveen's room, and saw her sewing something into her stays at bedtime. But Anna kept it to herself until discovery had come."

Tod could frown pretty well on ordinary occasions, but I never saw a frown like the one on his brow as he listened. And I thought—I thought—it was meant for Sophie Chalk.

Lady Whitney, I expect, knows it all now, Tod. Perhaps Helen also. Old Brandon went over to the Hall to spend the day, and it was in consequence of what he heard from Lady Whitney and Miss Deveen that he came down here to look us up."

"Meaning *me*," said Tod. Not us. Use right words, Johnny."

"They did not know, you see, that Sophie Chalk was married. And they must have noticed that you cared for her."

Tod made no comment. He just leaned against the shelf in silence. I was stacking my books.

"Good-night, Johnny," he quietly said, without any appearance of resentment; and went into his room.

The next day was Palm Sunday. Tod lay in bed with a splitting headache, could not lift his head from the pillow, and his skin was as sallow as an old gander's. "Glad to hear it," said Mr. Brandon, when I told him; "it will give him a quiet day for reflection."

A surprise awaited me that morning, and Mr. Brandon also. Miss Deveen was at Oxford, with Helen and Anna Whitney. They had arrived the evening before, and meant to stay and go up with Bill and with us. I did not tell Tod: in fact, he seemed too ill to be spoken to, his head covered with the bedclothes.

You can't see many a finer sight than the Broad Walk presents on the evening of Palm Sunday. Everybody promenades there, from the Dean downwards. Our party went together: Miss Deveen, Helen, and Anna; Bill, I, and Mr. Brandon.

We were in the middle of the walk; and it was at its fullest, when Tod came up. He was better, but looked worn and ill. A flush of surprise came into his face when he saw who we had with us, and he shook hands with the ladies nearly in silence.

"Oxford has not mended your looks, Mr. Todhetley," said Miss Deveen.

"I have one of my bad headaches to-day," he answered. "I get them now and then."

The group of us were turning to walk on, when in that moment there approached Sophie Chalk. Sophie in a glistening blue silk, and flowers, and jingling ornaments, and kid gloves. She was coming up to us as bold as brass with her fascinating smile, when she saw Miss Deveen, and stopped short. Miss Deveen passed on without notice of any kind; Helen really did not see her; Anna, always gentle and kind, slightly bowed. Even then Madam Sophie's native impudence came to her aid. She saw they meant to shun her, and she nodded and smiled at Tod, and made as though she would stop him for a chat. He took off his cap to her, and went on. Anna's delicate face had flushed, and his own was white enough for its coffin.

Miss Deveen held Tod's hand in parting. "I am so glad to have met you again," she cordially said; "we are all glad. We shall see you often, I hope, until we go up together. And all you young people are coming to me for a few days in the Easter holidays. Friends cannot afford too long absences from one another in this short life. Good-bye; and mind you get rid of your headache for to-morrow. There; shake hands with Helen and Anna."

He did as he was bid. Helen was gay as usual; Anna rather shy. Her pretty blue eyes glanced up at Tod's, and he smiled for the first time that day. Sophie Chalk might have fascinated three parts of his heart away, but there was a corner in it remaining for Anna Whitney.

I did not do it intentionally. Going into our room the next day, a sheet of paper with some writing on it lay on the table, the ink still wet. Supposing it was some message just left for me by Tod, I went up to read it, and caught the full sense of the lines.

"Dear Mrs. Every,—I have just received your note. I am sorry that I cannot drive you out to-day—and fear that I shall not be able to do so at all. Our friends, who are staying here, have to receive the best part of my leisure time. Faithfully yours, J. TODHETLEY."

And I knew by the contents of the note, by its very wording even, that the crisis was past, and Tod saved.

"Thank you, Johnny! Perhaps you'll read your own letters another time. That's mine."

He had come out of his room with the envelopes and sealing-wax.

"I beg your pardon, Tod. I thought it was a message you had left for me, seeing it lie open."

"You've read it, I suppose?"

"Yes, or just as good. My eyes seemed to take it all in at once; and I am as glad as though I had a purse of fairy gold."

"Well, it's no use trying to fight against a stream," said he, as he folded the note. "And if I had known the truth about the emeralds, why—there'd have been no bother at all."

"Putting the emeralds out of the question, she is not a nice person to know, Tod. And there's no telling what might have come of it."

"I suppose not. When the two paths, down-hill and up-hill, cross each other, as Brandon put it, and the one is pleasant and the other is not, one has to do a bit of battle with oneself in choosing the right."

And something in his face told me that in the intervening day and nights, he had battled with himself as few can battle; fought strenuously with the evil, striven hard for the good, and come out a conqueror.

"It has cost you pain."

"Somewhat, Johnny. There are few good things in the way of duty, but what do cost man pain—as it seems to me. The world and a safe conscience will give us back our recompense."

"And Heaven too, Tod."

"Ay, lad; and Heaven."

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

FROM SALZBURG TO GASTEIN.

THERE is no railway between Salzburg and Gastein. The only mode of communication is by diligence, or by hiring a private carriage which opens and closes at pleasure of the traveller.

This diligence was a lumbering machine after the fashion of its kind ;



SALZBURG.

but the horses were decent, and moved at a tolerably quick pace. Yet it was impossible thus to journey without losing a great part of the surrounding scenery ; an idea not to be entertained for a moment, except by those who like the guard and coachman have traversed the route so frequently, that familiarity has robbed it of its charm.

For one person, where economy is an object, the diligence is the quickest and best means of reaching Gastein. A carriage cannot do it under two days, without relays of post horses ; and even then the fatigue is considerable. But if two or more are travelling, it is almost as inexpensive to hire a carriage. The latter holds four ; so that an amicable parti-carré may travel for the price of one. In many parts of

the Tyrol, where there is no railroad, this is a consideration not to be lost sight of. Another consideration is, the importance of travelling with the smallest possible amount of luggage. This the Germans never forget. Sometimes I have charitably concluded that they must have brought with them at least a change of linen; but from the extent of their baggage it would have puzzled a conjuror to discover where it was stowed away. The English more frequently find their unwieldy trunks (not small in number by way of balance) have cost them in the end far more than they cost themselves: and certainly infinitely more trouble and anxiety.

Herr Jung, the landlord of the Hotel de l'Europe, strongly advocated a carriage in preference to the diligence. Indeed, he went beyond the boundary of mere counsel, and agreeably settled the matter by saying that it was the only course to be adopted, and that he would make it his business to select an easy conveyance and a good coachman. We were loath to leave a place so beautiful, and could scarcely have done so, but that it was in our plan to return to it again. It would be impossible to speak too highly of the hotel, of its comfort and good management; and of its unrivalled site.

Afternoon had set in when we started for Gastein, in an open carriage, at the quiet pace of a pair of horses. Golling, that evening's destination, ought to be reached about seven o'clock: and I was anxious to get there before nightfall, for the purpose of visiting a famous waterfall in the neighbourhood.

In time we reached the village of Hallein, at the foot of the Dürrenberg, noted for its salt mines. I had entered a salt mine at Berchtesgaden, and felt no desire to repeat the experiment. In most respects it was disappointing, fulfilling none of those visions of lofty caverns, and stately pillars, and grand arches, blazing and flashing like diamonds, that somehow float in the mind in connection with the subject. Explored also by many ladies, none surely would be bold enough to venture did they but know what lay before them. Sliding down a very long, steep incline of wood, astride on the back of a miner, at a breathless rate, is one of the inevitable and not very feminine feats to be performed during the inspection.

Without halting at Hallein, we drove on through scenery growing each moment more wild and grand. Crossing the Salza and ascending the right bank, the valley narrowed; and soon was perceived rising, the wild mass of the Tännengebirge, a long uninterrupted chain of mountain. The next village was Kuckl; and between six and seven o'clock Golling was entered, and that day's journey came to an end.

The quaintest village ever seen: consisting of one long, winding street; a crude, unworldly aspect about the houses, which all resembled each other, and gave to the place a primitive appearance that reminded you of nothing so much as a Quaker-settlement. Every house was

whitewashed, and looked almost dazzlingly clean. Each roof was pointed and overhanging ; large stones placed here and there as a protection against the fall of winter snows. The effect of this uniformity was pleasing to a stranger because the architecture—to apply a ridiculously grand word to the most humble of buildings—was so marked and uncommon : but the stiffness of the whole was a prominent feature. At the entrance of the village was a toll-bar : a long pole with a heap of stones at one end that balanced the pole upwards when the rope holding it was unfastened. By this means, at night, the keeper is enabled, without getting up, in answer to the horn carried by most of the post boys, to slacken the rope and raise the bar.



GOLLING.

Not less primitive than the village was the inn ; and if the rooms were not luxuriously furnished, they were large and clean. But it was not so primitive in all respects : the landlord knew how to charge. Taking all things into consideration and comparison, it was on the whole the dearest place we stayed at in Germany : dearer than the best hotels in Munich (which are not dear) ; certainly more advanced than the Hotel de l'Europe. Vexed, and a little indignant at the bill, I determined that Golling should not be the halting place on the return journey. But our best laid plans, like many of our good intentions, often come to nought ; and on that subsequent journey, it so happened

that, spite of foregone resolutions, it was found impracticable to stop anywhere else.

The village is surrounded by mountains that from their peculiar form look higher than they are in reality : on one side sufficiently distant to admit of a rich and fertile plain. Whilst tea was brewing at the inn, I strolled out into the village for a moment, and into the church, which had no beauty to recommend it ; and on the exterior, several representations in relief from the New Testament, let into the wall, rather revolting for their ugliness. The graveyard was in perfect order, many of the simple stones bearing inscriptions from the Book of Wisdom. One text seemed especially a favourite :

"But the souls of the righteous are in the Hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seem to die : and their departure is taken for misery, and their going from us to be utter destruction : but they are in peace."

Somehow, to find the well known text in this primitive, out-of-the-world spot, so far from home, from all familiar objects ; brought to the mind more forcibly than anything else could have done, the fact that distant as nations are separated from each other ; opposite as they may be in habits, manners, customs, thoughts ; still they possess the one great link that binds them together : the same faith, the same hope ; even as they must all pass through the one same dark portal of death. Alike in the great, eternal creed.

Over all there was an air of quiet and repose ; an atmosphere of sanctity that made itself felt if it could not be seen ; proclaiming with what reverence these people regard their religion.

Tea quickly despatched, we started off for the waterfall, a young blacksmith's boy acting as guide.

He was a lad of about sixteen, but looked at least two or three years younger. His expression at a first glance seemed stupid, bordering on deficiency ; but as we went on and he began to talk, his face lighted up with intelligence.

"Have you a father or mother?" I asked.

"No," was the reply : "both dead."

"Any brothers and sisters?"

"Two sisters and one brother. All out at work and doing for themselves."

"Are they older than you?"

Yes. He was the youngest of all.

"What work do you do?"

The question was unneeded for the boy's complexion sufficiently betrayed his occupation ; but it followed naturally.

"Schmidt," said he, with such a short, crisp, abrupt sound, that it was impossible to restrain an equally short, crisp laugh.

"What made you choose so dirty a trade?"

"I like it," he replied. "It is warm in winter. One of my sisters works in the fields: that would not suit me. The other is a servant."

"Do you earn wages?"

"Not yet, Herr. Next year I shall begin."

"How do you manage about clothes?"

"I sometimes have them given to me. Sometimes a little money, too. My sisters help me as far as they can; they can't do much."

"Do you like apples?" I asked, after we had walked a little way in lence.

"Oh ja!" And this time the gleam of intelligence was unmistakable.

I had taken one from the tea-table as a curiosity, the biggest and ruddiest of its kind ever seen. Here was a good opportunity of disposing of it. The boy turned it critically round with both hands, smelt it, and finally crammed it into his pocket with a smile of satisfaction.

"I like apples," said he; "and this is a beauty."

"Why don't you eat it?"

He shook his head. "By and by. Not now. We are coming to the waterfall."

We had reached the foot of the mountain, and could hear the water dashing over the stony rocks. A short, steep ascent, and we came to it. Dusk was growing apace, and much of the beauty of the scene was fast disappearing with daylight. But on the other hand there was that mysterious atmosphere of holiness and repose over nature that always accompanies the twilight. We clambered up to a small wooden bridge thrown across the chasm, whence could be obtained the best view of the dashing fall, both above and below. The spray flew over in a shower, but who cared when so spell-bound? It was a sight not to be lost, though the volume of water was less great than rumour had led one to anticipate. Its situation was completely romantic. The solitude at this darkening hour seemed excessive, striking the senses with awe. No sound save the roaring of the waters, no sign of human habitation but the mill below; of which the stream in its course worked the wheel.

Not until darkness had quite crept over all did we turn back. As we descended the path towards a picturesque hut built of rough logs of wood, the mill door opened, and a woman with a lighted candle issued forth. We all reached the hut together, and then observed that it contained photographs, stones, bits of wood, and other curiosities for sale. Even here, at this hour of the night, when one might have thought to escape under cover of the darkness, the inevitable bargain had to be made. So after due examination of the relics, we were set free of the toils with a view of the waterfall and a fossil stone. The candle was extinguished, and the solitary but civil and pleasant woman walked back to her mill. As the door closed behind her with a click,

I wondered whether she had any one to keep her company in that dull desert-like habitation.

It was getting late when we reached the inn. Over and above rewarding the lad for his trouble, we gave him a brand new piece of silver money, with strict injunctions never to change it, but to keep it in memory of the evening. He faithfully promised, though his anxious inquiry as to its value was not to be received without suspicion. One would almost dread now to inquire how long it remained unbroken. Finally we parted : he probably to cultivate more tender relations with his apple ; we to our rooms and the luxury of unconsciousness.

But if for a moment I had indulged in the vain hope of a good night's rest, I was destined to be terribly undeceived. Whether the Gollingers are inclined to deafness ; or whether their hard, daily work blesses them at night with sleep so sound that nothing will awaken them ; cannot be told. Never, certes, was sleepless night passed in a more complete wilderness of noise.

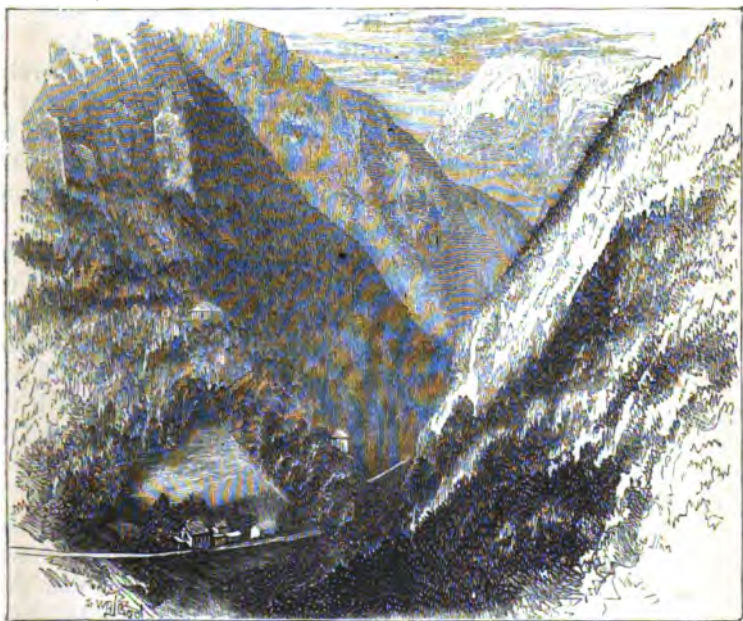
To begin with, once an hour a watchman patrolled the village, singing a verse of a hymn in one of the most unearthly voices ever heard. This seemed to irritate a company of dogs to so great an extent that they kept up an incessant barking and howling : and no one could wonder at their vigorous protest. One noise after another kept on in rapid succession until two o'clock. Then the diligence from Gastein came rattling over the stones of the street with a noise like thunder. The coachman cracked his whip as only the Tyrolese know how to do it, and the horrible machine with its two pair of cattle, dashed up to a standstill at the very door of the inn. A loud bell pealed through the empty spaces of the straggling building, and in a short time, which yet seemed an age, doors were unbarred and swung back, and there followed a clatter as of the changing horses. The conductor and a passenger jumped out of the interior ; and in about twenty minutes the whole concern crashed off again towards Gastein. The coachman had evidently treated his whip to beer as well as himself, for the cracks echoed amongst the hills like a volley of rifles ; the horses shook their heads and switched their tails : and like a faint roar of contending elements the sounds died away in the distance.

Soon after, as if to mock the hope of sleep that had begun to settle on heavy eyelids, the watchman reappeared upon the scene with his perpetual hymn tune and hideous tones. Then, ere long, darkness seemed to lift itself, and creep away from the room ; gradually one object after another grew visible ; the stars paled and flickered and went out ; the sky opened ; and daybreak was proclaimed with an insane chorus of cock-crowing. The dogs, now hoarse and weary, composed themselves to sleep ; the watchman went in ; but it was time for the world to turn out. The baker's house opposite was the first to uprouse. The shutters swung back, and a rush of vapour and a whole-

some smell of fresh-made bread were wafted upon the air. At five o'clock the church bell rang out a loud peal, and the village had entered upon a new day.

There was no time to be lost in idleness, although I was far less refreshed than when I had gone to bed the previous night. Breakfast was soon over; a basin of strong hot coffee brought new life with it; the bill was settled with many an inward protest: and at half-past six we were once more on the road to Gastein.

The morning at first was cold enough for any amount of rugs and shawls and great coats: but a few hours later, when the sun had



PASS LUEG.

climbed higher into the sky it grew as intensely, insufferably hot. Now, however, the mountains kept the sun away, and a pass was soon entered up which the wind rushed with a shiver in its wake. Almost immediately after leaving Golling, a steep ascent of five miles was commenced through the wild and magnificent Pass Lueg, necessitating an extra horse to the summit of the hill. The mountains closed in on both sides, a narrow valley between, through which rushed the Salza: closed in so nearly in many parts as scarcely to leave room for road and river. Sometimes they appeared as if about to close altogether and bar further progress; when the turn of an unsuspected angle would open up a fresh scene of beauty and grandeur, with a sudden-

ness, a mere twinkling of the eye, that seemed to border on the supernatural. The mountains were richly wooded with sombre, unbending pines, and occasionally far up the height, a small white fortress peeped out mysteriously amidst the dark foliage, perched on some jutting rock, to all appearance inaccessible.

After a long drive of this description, in which grandeur was literally heaped upon grandeur, we reached the village of Werfen, and halted an hour for the sake of the beasts, that in this instance were indeed of burden. The valley had expanded, and the mountains now looked a gigantic, overpowering mass, displaying themselves in wildest form and greatest height; surrounding us on every side. In comparison the houses looked a small, white cluster of sheds, that might easily be crushed and hidden for ever by a mere rolling fragment of rock.

It was yet early and the whole village was at church where service was being held. Night and morning, summer and winter, as many as are able assemble for a short prayer. The organ was playing as we entered the churchyard, but its swell soon died away on the air and the priest took up his part. In a few minutes the people flocked out and dispersed, each his own way to his own work.

High up on the left hand, on the summit of a rock separating the mountains, seeming by comparison a dwarf between giants, stood the castle, where, years ago, the protestants were persecuted. At its foot the river rushes past, where the poor bodies were thrown after torture and death. Pitched from the rock down the steep, perpendicular precipice. The rock is wooded with pine trees, through which the wind on a calm night goes sighing with a weird, sobbing sound, as if the unhappy spirits were still hovering amongst them, unable to rest in peace until their martyrdom had been avenged.

Some of the mountains, too, are wooded, and abound in wild strawberries: others are barren, rugged and rock-like, their tops covered with a white dazzling snow that makes them look larger than they really are, and in winter must give them a cold, inhospitable aspect. But at this time of the year, when everyone was almost prostrate with the heat, it was refreshing to turn one's eyes upwards. Yet after all, like the fox and the grapes, you ceased to envy the mountain tops, seeking consolation in the thought that probably the cold up there was not less trying to the nerves than the heat below.

Altogether, I liked the place, and the people of the inn, and determined to stay here the night on the return journey, in preference to Golling. But, as has been already remarked, the wish was frustrated. For all that we shall meet with it again.

Man and beast rested and refreshed, the cavalcade once more set off on its travels. The sun was now well up in the sky, and rugs and coats had to be put out of sight. The amount of dust was an unfathomable mystery. It seemed as if the sandy desert had transferred

its quarters bodily ; every now and then a gust of wind would carry up a cloud that shut out everything, and left you in chaos. Long before Gastein was thought of, the cavalcade was so disguised by it as to be past recognition even by its best friends.

Quitting Werfen, the valley continued to widen a little, and the road separated : one leading into Styria and Carinthia, the other, in due time, to the village of Bischofshoven. Here the Tännengebirge were left behind, and we passed into new, though not less wild and remarkable scenery. The continuous and somewhat monotonous chain of mountain was broken. The Salza was again crossed, and following the right bank of the river, a steep rugged ascent led to St. Johann.

Beyond this, the road swept round, and passed through the valley by the river side. The mountains here seemed to have taken form according to their own fancy, and some of them looked green and fertile. Wild flowers, beautiful and abundant, grew by the road side, interspersed with strawberry roots laden with unripe fruit. Here and there a little way up the slopes were clusters of the Alpine rose, not yet in full bloom. The rapid river bounded over its hard, shallow bed with an unceasing sound, the music of the mountains ; whilst at intervals a dull thud smote upon the ear, as a log of wood, floating down to its destination, came into contact with a huge stone jutting its head above the water.

Thus journeying, until the small village of Schwarzach was reached. Like many other of the best things that keep themselves retired and unknown, this village, perhaps of all, deserves the most mention, honour, and glory. It was here that in 1729 the leaders of the Protestant peasants met and bound themselves by a solemn oath that come life or death, victory or persecution, they would never renounce their faith. In the end, some endured martyrdom ; others, an immense body, had to fly for refuge, exiles, into foreign lands.

The Salza was again crossed, and Lend in due time reached ; immediately after which you enter the pass leading to the valley of Gastein. The horses again rested, for the most difficult part of the journey was about to commence. It is rumoured that ere very long a railway may be constructed from Salzburg to Lend, thus materially shortening the distance to Gastein. But beyond this point it may safely be asserted that all the power and ingenuity of man will be unable to extend it.

We now turned southward, and with the help of four horses commenced ascending the Pass Klamme, the terrific nature of which it would be impossible to give an idea. The mountains on either side are steep and precipitous, in parts perpendicular, and at times almost closing in. Ascending higher and higher the channel grows deeper and deeper still, until at last you look far down into the yawning depths with an involuntary shudder. The rugged road is cut out of the side of the precipice ; in places so narrow that if two carriages happen to meet, one or the

other has to draw into a hollow of the rock, blasted out for the purpose. Occasionally you pass under a deep overhanging piece of rock that seems threatening to fall and crush the luckless wayfarer. The sense of the dangerous and terrible is in many places heightened by cracks and fissures, so that portions of stone, big as houses, seem suspended as it were by a mere thread, on the point of snapping. That many enormous pieces have fallen from time to time is testified by the fragments that lie at the bottom of the precipice, and by the eternal ruts that mark their path to their final resting place. So grand and fearful was it that it is no figure of speech to say that breath was taken away; not from fear—in moments of danger or excitement fear finds no place—but from the nature of the scene. At one point was an ancient gateway and castle, the Klamstein, commanding the pass, built as far back as the eleventh century, and still in perfect preservation.

The ascent achieved, the valley of Gastein opened to view.

There are three villages of Gastein at some distance from each other. Dorf-Gastein, Hof-Gastein, and lastly Wildbad-Gastein, sometimes shortened to Bad-Gastein; more commonly called simply Gastein: the Gastein par excellence. Beyond this there is still Böckstein, a corruption of Böck-Gastein; a small village now utterly insignificant. Here comes what may fairly be called the end of the world, for vehicles of every description having got so far must confess themselves beaten, and for many miles retrace their steps.

First, Dorf-Gastein, whence at the far end of the valley the snow mountains towered into sight. But the valley here is so wide; looking all the wider in contrast with the narrow pass just scaled; that you forget the fact of its being a valley. On either hand the mountains are green and fertile, sloping away and resembling a little those gardens on the banks of the Rhine.

Beyond Hof-Gastein began the final ascent leading to Gastein, which from a distance looked a small cluster of houses embedded in the mountains: great mountains that closed in at the head of the valley in every direction but that from which we were travelling. Heart sank and pulse went down as I wondered whence came the wonderful, much-vaunted, fresh, life-giving breezes.

"That is not Gastein," I asserted to the coachman, on the verge of despair, as if putting the question in the form of a denial would influence the answer.

"Ya! ya! Gastein," responded he, quite as emphatically, and with a sigh of relief.

"But I thought Gastein was at the top of a high mountain?"

"I don't think we have had much down-hill work," retorted the man comically.

"True. But there are mountains still higher."

"And high enough they are," he answered in the same tone. "I

shouldn't care to drive to the top of one of them. Neither would you, mein Herr."

"All they who pass these portals leave hope behind." In some such frame of mind, and in silence, the ascent was accomplished right into Gastein itself. Past a church in course of erection ; past a house or two, perched up on the right ; past a long, low room that seemed built of nothing but glass ; and into the yard of Straubinger's Hotel, recommended as the best Gastein afforded.

Without regret or sorrow I found myself at length in a place of rest ; peace and quiet in perspective. We had not written to secure rooms, and thanks to the early time of year were fortunate enough to find good ones unoccupied. The head waiter led the way down a narrow passage into a good sized room opening into a smaller one, walls and ceiling panelled with polished maple-wood, cool and delightful in appearance ; the only rooms in the hotel, two others excepted, so fitted up.

Repose at length. I sat down for a few moments pondering, and looked about. Sensation number one was a shock ; not an electric shock, or the shock of having seen a ghost ; but what just then was far worse than either. It threw a damper upon my hopes of Gastein, health, air, and all blessings to follow in their train. Expectations had been terribly exalted. I had thought to find Gastein, as already remarked, on the summit of a high mountain, embracing all the pure air of heaven : and in place beheld a village completely embedded in the earth. Impossible to conceive a spot more so. In England it had been said that we should find it cold : so cold that the idea of going so early in the year was in itself absurd. Such was the place in perspective ; such the climate. In reality it was hot with an intense and glowing heat seldom felt elsewhere. In vain to throw wide the windows ; not a breath of air rustles the leaves ; not a sound came from the pines on the far-off mountain tops. Other sounds there were, but too loud and near to be agreeable : proceeding from an enormous waterfall that washed the very side of the inn, and with a voice of mighty thunder went dashing down a steep precipice far into the valley. Beautiful it was indeed ; but in sound awful.

Unless the reader has dwelt some considerable time beneath the shadow of a waterfall : so near that by stretching out a hand he may catch the spray ; and that a fall not such as may occasionally be seen on the stage or met with in artificial pleasure-grounds, but one of the largest masses of downpouring water in Europe : unless has been experienced the sensation of a never-ending sound, from which there can be no escape ; day and night seeming to bid defiance by its ceaseless roar : if this has not been experienced by the reader, it would not be possible to sympathise with me in those first hours. Until then I, too, had never dwelt under the shadow of a torrent, great or small ;

never in hearing of any continuous sound save of the restless ocean, which is altogether a thing apart. The one will soothe you to slumber; the other may lash you into—a fine frenzy, certainly—that of madness.

My ponderings came speedily to the following conclusion, divided—like an old-fashioned parson's sermon—into three heads and an application: Unmanly to sit down and shed tears: wicked to swear: impossible to go straight back at once, blow up friends and doctors, and send them all to the — to Hanover. There remained only to endure.

Yet was it not a thought worthy of despondency to have come so far for so little purpose? Snow? yes, certainly, on the tops of the mountains; in the hollow the heat of the tropics twice told.

The next day, Sunday, I sallied forth to reconnoitre what I now looked upon in the light of nothing less than a fiend disguised as a friend. Down the vale in search of air, where none was. Alone, in a kind of rabid despair, I gave vent to pent-up feelings, and like a maniac shouted for air. A dozen echoes from the surrounding mountains seemed to bring back the mocking answer, Where? At least to an overwrought imagination it sounded very much like it. Up higher into the mountains, and so nearer the sun, but the exertion gained no other reward. On to the Bridge of Terror, where you might look up and down at the overpowering rush of water. A glorious sight; to be admitted with all one's powers; but in that existing frame of mind yielding neither pleasure nor consolation. Then back to the hotel in time for the one o'clock table d'hôte; and, all things considered, with some appetite for the banquet.

Monday rose red-hot and bright as the preceding day. The torrent, with its unceasing roar, was still there. Instead of feeling better for the rest from travel, I seemed to have gone back many degrees since Saturday; and was beginning to debate most seriously upon the expediency of packing up and returning home, when a thought flashed like an inspiration upon the dulled senses, that it might be as well first to call upon some doctor and ask him in what lay the wonderful virtue of the place.

About ten o'clock I strolled out, and turning to the left soon came upon a small stone building consisting of two rooms. On the door, in large black letters, was written DAMPFBAD; on the lintel the name of a doctor, and *Nachtglöcke*. The door stood invitingly open: an omen to the superstitiously inclined. I rang boldly.

WHAT OUR ADVERTISEMENT BROUGHT.

DEBORAH had an idea. She repeated that fact several times most provokingly before she would tell me what the idea was. We had just been going over our account-books for the twentieth time that week ; and had seen, more clearly than ever, that we must begin in earnest now to live on half as much as we had allowed ourselves during the life of our stepmother, whose jointure died with her.

Well, the question was, and had been ever since the funeral, how were we to manage this? We had sold the pony-carriage and dismissed our manservant, but, even without those luxuries, we could not keep on the old country house in which so many rooms were unnecessary to us. Our old lawyer said, "Let the house just as it is. I will find you a good tenant who will not spoil the furniture, and the rent will make your income sufficient." Deborah grew hysterical at the idea, and I had some difficulty in bringing her round. Other friends gave other advice. "Sell all the house contains; you will be sure to have a good sale. Add the proceeds to your capital, and you can live very comfortably on the interest ; especially in such a place as—Dieppe, for instance."

The thought of this banishment from England was hard enough ; but that other thought ! Sell the furniture which we had cherished for—well, never mind exactly how many years, for Deborah and I were not quite so young as we had been : the furniture whose polishing we had always ourselves personally superintended ; and which we ourselves veiled in holland every night. Sell the plate which was our great and natural source of pride ; the plate we counted every night with unction before we entertained the thought of sleep ; the plate which was the envy of our neighbours at every party we gave. Sell the furniture and plate ! The proposal was a stab in our most tender part.

We had talked over our affairs a great deal ; it was very cold weather, and sitting over the fire discussing a subject of such importance was not disagreeable, but we had arrived at no definite conclusion when Deborah so abruptly told me that she had an idea. When she was at last prevailed upon to explain, this was what it was : "Suppose we take a house in London large enough to do credit to the chief and best of our furniture, and receive a gentleman to board with us, giving him up one or two rooms. What he would pay us would make the rent as easy for us as if we took a pottering little house, which I'm sure would kill me. This would be an advantage in many ways, don't you see ? We should have somebody in the house who would appreciate the plate and the comfort of our home, and we need not part with the things we are fond of. There, Lavinia, that's my idea ; what do you think of it ?"

Afraid of committing myself if I answered rashly, I took a long time to deliberate. But I came to think with Deborah, because I could not propose anything else on my own account ; and it all came be settled so.

Two months after that, we were beginning to feel settled in our house in — but I think, for several reasons, I had better not say in what favourite suburb of London ; and the greater number of our favourite goods and chattels were about us. The house was certainly one of a terrace, and we were too country-bred to relish that, but still (as Deborah said) it was all the safer.

Gradually we grew to know our neighbours a little—by sight I mean, the windows being as pleasant parts of the room as any other to sit in. But one we knew personally, having chanced to make his acquaintance during our troublesome removal. He is a bachelor, living next door to us, and, for all profession, he is “on” one of the daily papers. I’m sure I don’t know exactly what it means, or why he should be there when he looks clever enough to be an author or a poet. But he says he is “on it,” and seems satisfied ; and so, as Deborah says, “it is unnecessary for us to regret it.” I should have fancied it would not be very profitable for a gentleman to be on a paper that you can buy anywhere for a penny, but I don’t know what to say when I see his house, for it is most handsomely furnished, and there is only himself and his housekeeper to occupy it. The first floor of each house in this terrace contains a drawing-room to the front and bed-room to the back. Mr. Hall sits to write in the drawing-room, and sleeps in the room behind. In our house those are the two rooms we want to let ; and, though I say it that should not—also Deborah who should not either,—two more comfortable rooms could nowhere be found. “You should not say so, Lavinia,” Deborah used to plead ; “still if any one had a right to look for a permanent and grateful tenant, I think it would be ourselves.”

The next thing, of course, was to get this permanent and grateful tenant ; and we began to draw up our advertisement ; for Mr. Hall (that is our next door neighbour on the left—the house next to ours on the right is unfortunately vacant) had told us emphatically that an advertisement was our best agent. We drew it up between us. Don’t imagine that I mean we drew it up that night. No ; ours was not an advertisement to be hastily compressed within the limits of one evening. That was Saturday, and by the next Thursday it was ready for us to leave at the office of the paper ; for we knew the post was no vehicle for such a document as this.

“Eleven shillings,” said the clerk, counting the words as indifferently as if they had been common-place ones.

“Eleven shillings !” echoed Deborah, ruefully. “Is that not rather high ?”

"It's a long advertisement," he said, looking as if he carelessly weighed it with his eye.

"You counted very rapidly," commented Deborah, politely. "Do you feel as if you had been quite correct?"

I do not wish to say the young man was not civil, but I was conscious that his expression too nearly bordered on a laugh. Besides, though he appeared to count again, he held to the eleven shillings; and Deborah had to pay it too.

"Of course, as the charge is so high, the advertisement will be inserted at once," spoke Deborah, with confidence. I was sorry once more to remark in the young man an inclination to smile, because otherwise he was well behaved. And, indeed, it is due to him here to state that he evidently *did* exert himself on our behalf, for next day our advertisement was in.

To us the paper seemed to contain nothing else, though I remember that many people said about that time that the daily papers were filled with the Claimant.

"It reads beautifully," remarked Deborah. "That one idea of mine, about full liberty with the comfort of home, tells excellently; not that I wish to take the credit, Lavinia; we will look upon the whole composition as a joint production."

Which view I took also.

"That idea of inviting a call is good too," continued Deborah. "You remember my saying *that* would take, when I first proposed it. Now make haste over your breakfast, Lavinia. Some one may call directly. Each one would try to be first. I will go at once and change my dress."

And Deborah rose, to my intense surprise, without waiting for her second cup of tea. "Don't be excited," she said, putting an anti-macassar into her pocket and dropping her handkerchief; "I am always calm over these things. Dear me, Lavinia, how mean the other advertisements look beside ours."

We could not have a pudding *that* day, so I was soon ready to join Deborah, and prepared to entertain our callers as they might flock to us. We had put on our tabby silks and garnet ear-rings, and I think we looked very nice indeed, and not nearly so anxious and frightened as we really felt. Mary Ann, too, was dressed, and sewing in her tidy kitchen; for though I didn't myself fancy that any gentleman would ask to see the kitchen, Deborah said one never could foresee what London people might do.

Well, though that was one of the longest days I ever spent, I need not make it so long in the telling. At dark, when Ann came in to close the shutters, Deborah and I were still sitting in our tabby silks, working at the Berlin work, which we always kept to take out to tea with us, and trying to look as if we always wore shot silks and garnets, and had

not put them on for any special purpose in creation. But when Ann asked whether "The gentlemen we were expecting would be here to tea, and how many cups she should bring in," I really thought Deborah would have an attack of some kind.

I was very glad to see the tea come in ; it did us both good. I was inclined by that time to give up all hope, and the feeling (though laden with despair) brought with it a certain sense of relief. I put my chair exactly in front of the fire, turned up my dress, and put my feet on the fender : not so much because they were cold as because the attitude was such a thorough change. But Deborah was more thoughtful. "Gentlemen engaged in their offices all day," she said, "will only be able to call in the evenings."

We cheered up again at that idea. The house looked so warm and bright and snug that we congratulated each other on the gentlemen not having called until now. Slowly the evening went on, leaving us undisturbed.

"I wish Mr. Hall would drop in," sighed I ; "this is such a waste of our best silks."

"And of the fires all over the house," added Deborah.

An hour's pause, during which I managed to snatch forty refreshing winks.

"Eleven shillings was an exorbitant price for that advertisement," ruminated Deborah, presently.

We went to bed an hour earlier than usual, feeling as if the day had been a week long, but next morning we rose almost as hopefully as we had done the day before. I could not let cook make the lemon pudding—it is one of the things she never *will* learn to do properly, and in which I am very particular, and, perhaps I may add, successful. So Deborah was stationed alone for some time in the drawing-room, sighing that her best dress would soon not be worth picking up.

And just think of it ! I had only that minute finished the pudding, when the knock came. I stood in the kitchen, my heart fluttering as I heard a manly voice and step in the dining-room. In less than ten minutes I was entering it myself, with as affable a smile as I could assume on so short a notice, and in my tabby silk and garnet ear-rings too.

There he was ; an elderly gentleman with a smiling face. It struck me pleasantly upon the instant that he was just one to enjoy a lemon pudding—if well made. He rose with gallantry and bowed to me. I offered to take his hat and stick, which he was nursing, but he would not hear of troubling me. So I smiled again and sat down.

"I have called in consequence of your advertisement," he explained to me politely. "It was a very attractive advertisement, and a young friend of mine, who is seeking apartments, requested me to come for him, as he is particularly engaged this morning."

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I had no idea what it would be becoming in me to say, so I bowed ;

thinking what a very low charge eleven shillings was for that advertisement.

"This young friend has been living with me for some time," continued the elderly gentleman, "and I am anxious that in another home he should not miss any of the luxuries—I hope I may say luxuries—to which he has been accustomed. I wish him to meet with a home superior to those generally offered to young men by advertisements. Yours appeared to me to be just such a one." Here he smiled at me. I suppose he had said the same and smiled the same at Deborah before. "Now, may I ask," he continued, pleasantly, "if you make an extra—a matter of the—say the linen and plate?"

Here was a glorious opening for Deborah. She told the elderly gentleman a chapter or two of our family history, and the reason of our taking this house, dotting the information with hints of the great value of our plate and linen; indeed, she almost went so far as to supply him with an inventory of them. And the elderly gentleman looked a little bit bored as he listened.

"I should like to show you the plate," concluded Deborah, waxing more and more chatty.

At first he seemed to think it would be troubling her very unnecessarily; but, perhaps, he fancied she would be hurt by his refusal, for he came round laughingly to express a wish to see our treasures. Deborah took him to the plate closet, while I hovered in the background, looking on and listening, while he admired everything to our hearts' content. After this we went upstairs, in a procession of three, to inspect the drawing-room. The elderly gentleman, still caressing his hat and stick, said there was no doubt about *that* being a pleasant and handsome room; and, of course, we entirely agreed with him.

"And this is the bedroom, is it?" he questioned, airily, as he moved into the back room.

His question drew Deborah in after him, but I lingered at the door. This was not a drawing-room, you see.

"Nice room," he said, heartily, as he sauntered up to the window.

I began to tremble when he reached it, for the view from this back window was not attractive. Just below ran the roof of the sculleries; beyond that a long strip of garden, ending in a wooden paling, and then the backs of other houses; and on the left a wide, bleak brick-field.

"A very fair, open look-out," remarked the elderly gentleman; and the beating of my heart grew regular again. "I am sure my young friend would be hard to please if he were not satisfied with this," he continued, smiling graciously. "Let me consider: Is there any other question I ought to ask? Have you any—any other gentleman residing with you?"

Deborah rather haughtily refuted the idea. "There is no one in the

house at all," she concluded, "but my sister, and myself, and the domestics, of course."

"The domestics, of course," he repeated, pleasantly; "and very comfortable must such an arrangement be. I can only hope my young friend will not unpleasantly intrude on your genteel and refined privacy. And now," he added, giving a last look round the room, "I have only to thank you for your kindly proffered information. I am sure my young friend will decide to take up his residence with you, and will doubtless wish to come at once. One thing—pardon my mentioning it, ladies,—the venetian blinds, being new, have a—have still a slight odour clinging to them: and the odour of paint is *not* too agreeable. Might I suggest that the window should be opened a little—allow me—a very little is enough. There, half an inch—quite sufficient. I trust you pardon the liberty of the suggestion."

We thought it a kind suggestion, and it was natural for us to tell him so. Deborah and I did so in concert, as we tripped downstairs before him.

Midway the elderly gentleman paused and looked back. "I see," he said, with a wave of his hand, "that my young friend will sleep alone on this story."

"Would that be a drawback?" inquired Deborah, with a sudden access of anxiety. "Was his young friend nervous?"

"Nervous; yes, a little," the elderly gentleman allowed, regretfully, "but only on the subject of fire."

Deborah and I both hastened to explain how we always saw the fires put safely out before we went to bed. Then the elderly gentleman's mind appeared quite set at rest on behalf of his young friend. There seemed nothing more to say, so he brushed his hat with his hand, bade us good-bye, put on his hat, went out upon the steps, and took it off again with a polite backward glance and bow. Presently, through the dining-room window, we saw him hail a hansom and drive off. I felt in a most exuberant state of delight, but contented myself by remarking stolidly that it had all turned out very well.

"Well!" echoed Deborah, ringing the bell twice as she spoke. "Didn't I tell you what that advertisement would bring? How cleverly we managed it. Now we must explain it all to Ann. She must be prepared and instructed. Put out the sheets, Lavinia; and how about the towels? and as for that new dozen of frilled pillow-covers—what a good thing I'm not excitable, else I should be in a pretty state now. How slow Ann is, and I want a hundred things done. Don't interrupt me when I am giving my orders, Lavinia; do be calm."

Our preparations were not entirely over until night, though (looking back now) I cannot remember any important thing we did except airing linen. I had determined to sleep on the spare bed, to keep it

well aired, for fear the elderly gentleman's young friend might be susceptible of cold. Only as I went up to my own room to prepare for bed did I close the window of the spare room: the new blinds should have the benefit of the air till the last moment. But I did not trouble myself to fasten the window, because I should have had to mount upon, or move the dressing-table.

Deborah laughed at the notion of the three only inmates of the house occupying a floor each, but I was firm, and passed on in my dressing-gown to my new room. I have two strong prejudices; one against locking myself into my bedroom; the other against sleeping in a lighted room; so, without turning the key or lighting the gas at all, I slipped into bed, drew the eider-down quilt up to my very nose, and went off to sleep at once—as anyone should do with an easy conscience and a good couch.

In the very dead of the night I was awakened by as slight a sound as ever could have awakened anyone. There was no glimmer of light in the room. If there were any from the sky or lamps without, the darkened venetian blind shut it entirely out. At first I thought that a sound in the street a long way off had disturbed me, then I fancied it was in the next house. But a moment afterwards these fancies were swallowed in the alarming certainty that this sound which had awakened me had been the skilful, cautious opening of the window of this room in which I lay alone—so small and femininely helpless.

The blind was moved almost noiselessly, and then the faint light from without showed me the dim outline of a man's figure coming softly and slowly into the room. Oh, where had been my common sense when I left the window unfastened? where had been my common sense when I volunteered to keep this bed aired?

I lay in death-like stillness, knowing that the very slightest movement might cost me my life. The room was so thoroughly dark that the very keenest eyes could not have detected me; could not even have distinguished the bed itself with its crimson quilt. The dressing-table scarcely creaked beneath its cautious burden, yet I felt that my ears—sharpened preternaturally by fear—could follow every step of the man as he descended from the window-seat into the room, and then stealthily advanced towards the door. I knew by instinct how skilfully he must be piloting himself. I felt the bedstead vibrate under me, while for a few steps he guided himself by holding the footboard. I followed his tread across the carpet, step by step, to the door; I heard the handle turned; and then I lay quite still in a horrible, sick fear.

But when I could hear the step safely outside—even there I could follow it, soft and cautious as it was—I breathed once more, and the stillness which I felt had saved my life, became suddenly unbearable to me. My first impulse was to jump up and turn the key

in the door; but in an instant I recollected that it was left on the outer side, as we had been in the habit of locking this room when we passed up to bed. If I attempted to go upstairs to Deborah the robber below might hear me; and, knowing himself discovered, would certainly rush up and murder us three defenceless women. No; I could not venture outside that door which the burglar had closed behind him. Yet how could I let Deborah sleep on with robbery and death so near her? or how could I leave the ruffian to help himself to all the valuables the house contained?

Even while I thought no plan was open to me, I had unconsciously determined what to do. I was even then groping for my dressing-gown: white though it was, I could only find it by feeling. My slippers I dare not put on for fear of a sound betraying me.

As cautiously as the thief had done, though far less skilfully, I crept step by step along the carpet. I moved the blind as he had moved it, though now it seemed to make a sound which all the terrace could hear; then I climbed to the window-seat and let myself down to the leads below. Yesterday these leads had looked to me close to the window—painfully and objectionally close—now they were so far below that I seemed to be falling down a precipice. And oh! the sensation in my bare feet when they touched the wet roof.

I had no doubt in my mind now as to the course I intended to pursue, or the quarter from which help was to be obtained. Mr. Hall himself slept in the back room on the first floor of his own house, and from him I knew I might expect assistance in my need.

I had never noticed until now that a kind of low brick wall ran up the leads, separating the houses. I came upon it unexpectedly in my chilly, groping passage, and however much in daylight I might have hesitated or feared, I climbed it, and went up to Mr. Hall's window. It would not do to allow myself time for shyness or compunction. I rapped against the glass; I rapped again and again. Of course, the room was all in darkness, but still I fancied I could wake Mr. Hall. I remembered that he told us once how often the cats wakened him, and I remembered, too, that Deborah said gentlemen on newspapers rarely slept. Again and again I knocked. If he had been as sound a sleeper as Ann he must have wakened at such summons, always supposing he had been there. So at last the dreary conviction stole upon me that he was not there. Then I felt that I must shriek out aloud in my despair, though I knew it would disturb the burglar and bring him out to me with his drawn knife.

Just then a light burst upon me carried by a gentleman who had drawn back from the window on observing the extraordinary spectacle of my figure on the leads.

"Miss Lavinia," said Mr. Hall—he spoke as courteously as if I had been in the drawing-room at home in my tabby silk and garnet

ear-rings, but I could see how hard he found it to say anything at all—"tell me what has alarmed you?"

I forgot then all about my novel costume; I even forgot the wet and cold. With a sob of relief to begin with, I told him everything, only interrupted by fits of coughing. He listened astonished and excited, while the gentleman within the room gradually lost his scruples, and drew quite close to the window to question me.

"We were sitting together downstairs," explained Mr. Hall, "when we fancied we heard a knocking somewhere, without being able to distinguish where; at least, I fancied it, while my friend ridiculed the very idea. But we decided to go over the house together, and had reached this room when I saw you. I am glad my friend is still with me, for we will collar this scoundrel. You say you did not lock the door after him? that's right—at least, it will be all right if we can insure his trying to effect his escape in the manner he effected his entrance. It will not do to make any alarm, because if we rouse Miss Deborah she will naturally run downstairs, and may perhaps fall right into the villain's way. At the same time, we must not give him the chance of letting himself out by the front door while we lie in wait for him here. Fielding, what plan have you to suggest?" Fielding, then, was the young man who had come up close to us now in a most indifferent manner. I—I hoped I should never see Mr. Fielding again after to-night.

"It will hardly do for us to separate," he said, pondering, "for if he has only one man to elude, he may be prepared to make short work of it."

I remember putting in a disjointed speech here, to the effect that, if they perilled their lives, I could never enjoy mine again; but they only smiled, instead of promising me.

There was a silent pause, while they cogitated; and I had leisure to—to feel exceedingly uncomfortable.

"I've thought of a plan," said Mr. Hall, at last. (I think that being on a daily paper makes a gentleman unusually quick.) "What do you think of it, Fielding? I will take Miss Lavinia down, while you keep watch here. As soon as I have let her through the front door, I return to you, and we take up our station one each side that next window. Meanwhile, she goes to her own front door, and knocks; a ready, natural, fearless knock, which will startle the thief, and make him hasten to this back window, where you and I will have the pleasure of seizing him."

Broken so abruptly to me, the part I had to play seemed terrible; but I knew nothing else could be done. I remember, with a haunting distinctness, that journey of mine from the scullery roof to Mr. Hall's front door, under his guidance. I remember with what thoughtfulness Mr. Fielding made himself invisible as I passed through the gaslit

room. I remember creeping down the stairs behind Mr. Hall, while I thanked him in my heart for never mentioning a light. I remember the utter silence with which he gave me his own slippers, and let me out into the chill, wet street.

And then to think of me! Standing at my own door in the middle of the night; in my dressing-gown and Mr. Hall's slippers, tapping a long prompt natural knock, and waiting for what might follow. Would it be admittance, or a cry of murder, or *what* would it be? I wondered as I stood there shivering as if with ague (for one generally wonders at a time of the keenest dread if only a moment of inaction intervenes) whether anyone else in all the quiet sleeping street had ever spent such a night as this; wondering what the policeman would say to me when he passed, as he would—as he must in about another moment; wondering how soon we could sell our furniture and let our house and go away where I could hide myself on some lone mountain-side, where this story could never reach.

A fit of coughing interrupted this arrangement. How many hours ago was it I had knocked? Had I better rap again? Surely the day must be dawning. Surely by now the marauder must have killed both my gallant, brave preservers, and escaped in safety through the garden?

Interminable as this waiting time had seemed to me, the morning had *not* dawned; the policeman even had not passed; when our door was opened to me by Deborah herself—alive, and apparently unmaimed, but as white as a sheet. At first we intended to faint in each other's arms, but something prevented us—a call to us from the bed-room on the first floor.

"I heard the sounds in that room," explained Deborah, excitedly amid her tears, as I put on a waterproof in the hall, "and I thought it was you, and went down. I couldn't wake Ann, though I tried all the time I was dressing. And then, when I went to the door, they—they told me they'd got him safe—the murderer—in the dark there. Oh! Lavinia, I shall never sleep again. And they sent me to open the door to you; and—and——"

We had reached the bedroom by this time, and found that the gas had been lighted; and there, sitting right under it, tied in his chair, and guarded by Mr. Hall and his friend, sat the ruffian burglar. If ever there were in the world two women who might have been knocked down by one feather, those two women were Deborah and I; for this robber and marauder was the elderly gentleman who had called in answer to our advertisement; the elderly gentleman who had been anxious that his young friend should find a comfortable, airy home with us; the elderly gentleman who had been particular about the plate and linen!

Deborah told all this in a breath, begging me to be calm; but she might more naturally have begged this of Mr. Hall and Mr. Fielding,

for they were laughing and enjoying themselves tremendously at the spectacle of this elderly gentleman piteously entreating to be released, and begging them to take the silver from a lot of hidden-away pockets. I've always been glad since that they did not leave the decision to Deborah and me; for he was a practised villain, you see, and might have done endless mischief elsewhere; which he cannot do now.

That very night Deborah and I quite determined we would leave London at once; and we made our plans, crying all the time from excitement, and weariness, and disappointment, and the prospect of another removal after having just got comfortably settled, and spending all our surplus money.

Next evening, while I was nursing my cold, and we were both as melancholy as we could be, in came Mr. Hall and that young friend of his whom he had called Fielding. At first I was aggravated, and thought why couldn't they have come yesterday when we had on our tabby silks and looked so comfortable; but presently I forgot all about this. That night-adventure seemed to have made us all suddenly into old friends, and we laughed together over the burglary; and somehow—through the way Mr. Hall put it, I'm sure it was—I entirely forgot that my part (or even appearance) had been out of the common, and began to coincide with an implied sort of belief that Mr. Hall and his friend had managed it alone, and Deborah and I had only been required at the last moment to identify the ruffian. This view of the case suited me very well, and we got on most amicably to other matters. Other matters? Why, I speak of them, as if they were ordinary ones; and yet—and yet here was the *real* answer to our advertisement.

Mr. Fielding was seeking a home, he told us, and had a wish to be near his friend, though he could not live in a house that had not—as he expressed it—a lady at its head.

“And I do hope,” added Mr. Hall, genially, “that you will take him, Miss Lavinia. I want him near me, yet my irregular meals and hours would kill him. He has been used to the care of a mother and sister, and would miss them sorely in a bachelor's house.”

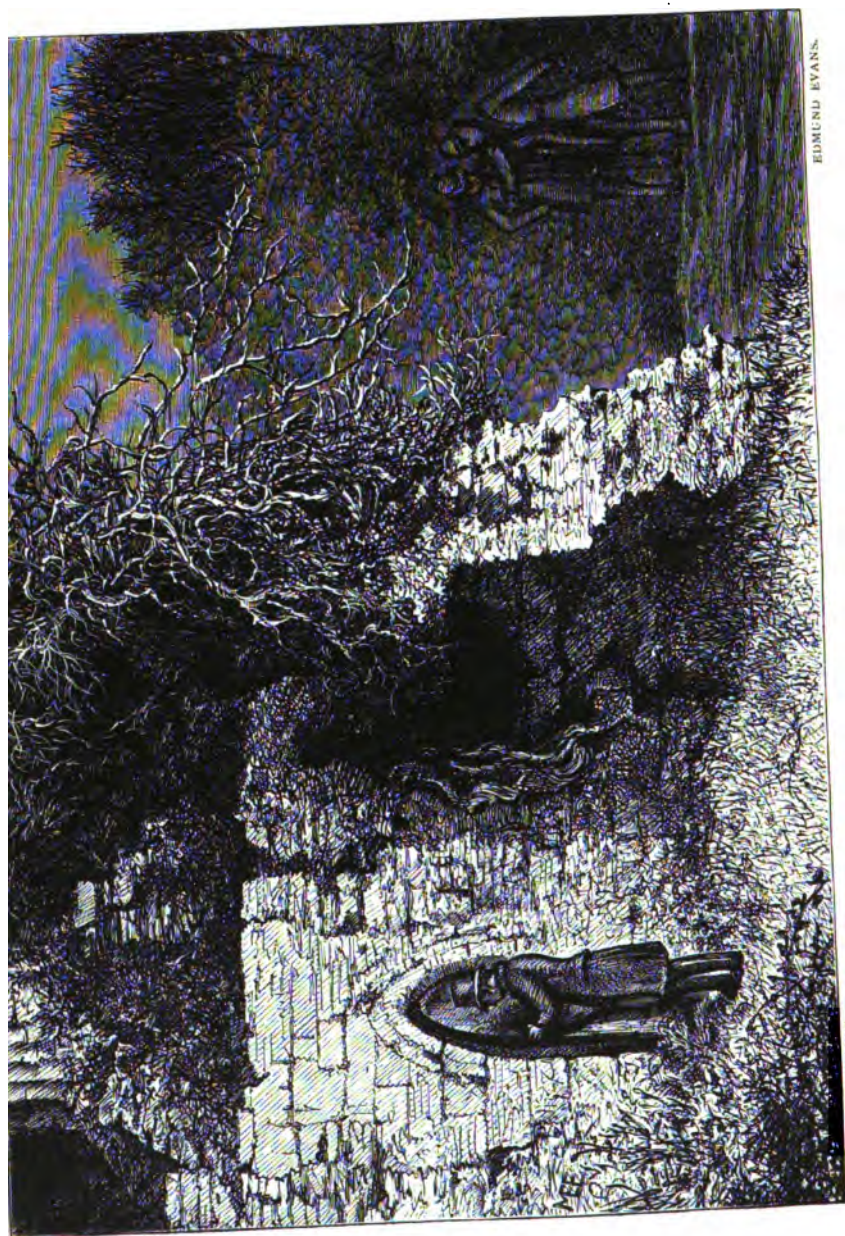
Well, before that visit was over it was all arranged, and now he lives with us; and is, as it were, one of us. He says he never misses his mother's care, having ours; and perhaps it is true, for Deborah and I have grown to love him well. And besides that, no one could more thoroughly appreciate the plate he rescued; or more thoroughly enjoy a good lemon-pudding.

MARK HARDCASTLE.

FORESHADOWING.

I KNOW, my friend,
 We never have been lovers ; but when we
 Of these sweet summer-hours shall find the end,
 And there shall be
 A courteous close to all our pleasant speech,—
 When you go out into the hurrying crowd,
 To battle like a warrior iron-browed,
 For all the worldly blessings which you claim,
 Wealth, power, and fame—
 Things which I do not crave and cannot reach—
 I wonder if your heart will be the same,
 Will beat as evenly and tranquilly—
 Away from me ?
 If, when you find your separate life once more,
 Twill be as whole and happy as before ?

It may be so—
 Ambition has broad leaves, which overgrow
 The feebler heart-plants, blooming small and low ;
 And yet, I think
 When time, or change, or both have snapped the
 link
 Which holds us now so lightly heart to heart,
 When you have found out new and pleasant ways
 From these apart—
 Have loved fair women, and have known great men,
 Perhaps grown great yourself, and tasted praise—
 Despite the rosy ties which bind you then,
 You will look back to these tame, quiet days
 With dim, strange pain—
 And haply in your dreaming think of me
 Half mournfully,
 Saying—while all surrounding witcheries
 Seem dull and vain,
 And Beauty's smile, and Flatt'ry's ministries
 Lose, for the time, their hold on heart and brain—
 " Ah, me ! how little she was like to these !
 Would I could look upon that face again ! "



EDMUND EVANS.

IN THE CHAPEL RUINS.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

THE ARGOSY.

MARCH 1, 1873.

THE MASTER OF GREYLANDS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE MOONLIGHT.

WHITE clouds were passing over the face of the blue sky, casting their light and their shade on the glorious sea. Not for a minute together did the sea present the same surface; its hue, its motions, and its ripples were for ever changing. Now, it would be blue and clear almost as crystal; anon, green and still; next, sparkling like diamonds under the sunlight: and each aspect seemed more beautiful than that which it had displaced.

To Anthony Castlemaine, gazing at it from his bedroom at the Dolphin Inn, no object in nature had ever seemed so beautiful. Not the vineyards of his native land; not the sunny plains of Italy; not the grand, picturesque mountains of Switzerland: all these he had been accustomed to from his youth, and they were fair to look upon: but to him they were as nothing compared with this wide, wondrous, ever-changing sea.

Some days, a very few, had elapsed since his visit to Stilborough, told of in the chapter preceding this; another week had come in, and this was the Tuesday in it: destined to be a most fatal day for more than one person connected with our story. The snow-storm he had anticipated in his homeward walk that afternoon had passed off without falling; the cold itself seemed now to have taken its departure. With that variable caprice that distinguishes our insular climate, the biting frost, the keen east wind, that had almost cut people through, had given place to the warm, cheering weather of a balmy spring.

Anthony Castlemaine had opened the casement window to admit the genial air, the fresh sea-breeze, and stood there in profound thought.

On the table lay a letter he had just written. Its seal of black wax stamped with the Castlemaine crest, and it was addressed to his native place, Gap, Dauphiné. Some shouting arose on the beach. A fishing-boat was preparing to put out; one of her men had not come down, and the two others and the shrill boy were raising their voices to make him hear. The laggard went dashing out of the Dolphin Inn, just under the view of Anthony.

Anthony Castlemaine was in perplexity. He did not see his way any clearer before him than he had seen it when he first came. That Greylands' Rest was legally his he now entertained very little doubt of; but, to prove it was another matter. Twice, since their first meeting, had he sought an interview with Mr. Castlemaine, and presented himself at Greylands' Rest; but Mr. Castlemaine had been each time denied to him.

The waves of the sea sparkled and rippled; the sun came out from behind a fleecy cloud and shone with renewed strength; a beautiful vessel in the distance was passing with all her sails set.

"It is very strange behaviour," mused Anthony. "If the estate belongs in truth to my Uncle James, why can he not show me that it does? His *not* showing it almost proves of itself that it is mine. I *must* get to see him: I cannot stay in the dark like this."

Taking up the letter, he descended the stairs, went across to the little general shop near the beach, and dropped it into the letter-box. He was quite at home in Greylands now, had made acquaintance with its inhabitants, and was known and recognized as the grandson of old Anthony Castlemaine. In returning, he met one of the Grey Sisters. Lifting his hat, he bowed to her with deep respect: for he regarded the Grey Ladies as a religious order, and in his native land these female Communities are held in reverence. Little Sister Phœby—she was very short and stout and middle-aged, and only one of the working sisters—bobbed down her grey head in return, giving him a kindly good-afternoon.

"And John Bent thinks that Mr. Castlemaine derides these good ladies!" thought Anthony. "It must be fancy. John—— Dear me! here's that most charming demoiselle again!"

She was advancing swiftly, seemingly wishing to catch Sister Phœby; her pretty figure attired becomingly in a light silk dress and short scarlet cloak, her strangely beautiful grey eyes cast on the sea with the same look of loving admiration that Anthony's own sometimes wore when gazing at it. He could have wished that this young lady was his sister, or really his cousin: for Anthony had not seen many faces in his life that he so believed in for truth and goodness and beauty as Ethel Reene's.

They had nearly met before she observed him. He stopped and addressed some words to her in deprecation of his former fault, keeping

his hat off while he spoke. Ethel answered him frankly, and held out her hand. Since the previous encounter, she had had time to digest the offence, to understand how it had arisen, and that he had not the least intention of insulting her; she had also been favourably impressed with what she had heard abroad of Anthony Castlemaine.

"Let us forget it," said Ethel, with her sweet smile. "I understand now how it happened; I know you did not intend any offence. Are you going to make a long stay at the Dolphin?"

"That must depend partly on Mr. Castlemaine," replied Anthony. "He will not give me an interview, and for myself I can scarcely see a step before my face. I must ask him once more to listen to me; I hope he will. I had some thought of going to him this afternoon."

"He is at home," said Ethel innocently, who only very imperfectly understood the trouble looming between the young man before her and Mr. Castlemaine.

"At home now? Then I will go to him at once," said he, acting on the impulse of the moment; and he again offered his hand to Ethel. "Adieu. I hope you have quite forgiven me, Miss Castlemaine."

"I have quite forgiven you, indeed: but I am not Miss Castlemaine, you know," she said, laughing, as she let her hand rest in his. "You will know my name better soon—Ethel Reene. Good-bye."

"And during her after life Ethel was wont to look back on this little meeting, to feel thankful that it had taken place, and that it was a pleasant one. For she never again saw the ill-fated young man in this world.

Recrossing the road, and passing the inn corner, Anthony got into the fields on his way to Greylands' Rest. They were pleasanter than the road that sunshiny afternoon. He walked along in deep thought, deliberating on what he should say.

Ah, if he could but have seen behind him! A double shadow followed him—as the poet Hood wrote of Miss Kilmansegg, going upstairs to her doom. His own natural shadow and another. Nearer and nearer it had been gradually drawing as the days went on; and now on this day it lay ready to close on him—as it would close ere the clock had told many more hours: the dark, dreadful, ominous shadow of death. Of a death done in darkness and secret.

In the last field, side by side with the avenue that led to Greylands' Rest, while Anthony was wondering whether he should be permitted to see his uncle or not, his uncle suddenly stood in front of him, coming through the little gateway that led into the field.

The Master of Greylands, erect, well dressed, handsome, would have passed him with a nod, but Anthony put himself in his way.

"Uncle James, I beg your pardon; I would not wish to be rude; but will you allow me to speak a few little words to you?"

"I am in a hurry," said Mr. Castlemaine.

"Will you give me then a short interview at your house this evening? Or to-morrow morning, if that will suit you better."

"No," replied Mr. Castlemaine.

"Twice I have been to Greylands' Rest, asking to see you, Uncle James; and twice have I been denied. Though the last time I think you were at home, and saw me from the window."

"You cannot have anything to say to me that I wish to hear or that would be profitable to yourself," returned the Master of Greylands: "for that reason I was denied to you. Our first interview was not so satisfactory that we need wish for another."

"But it is necessary that we should converse," returned the young man. "I am waiting to have this question settled as to Greylands' Rest."

"What question?" demanded Mr. Castlemaine, with haughty indifference—just as though he had quite forgotten anything had ever arisen in regard to it.

"Greylands' Rest is yours, Uncle James, or it is mine. I must ascertain which of us it belongs to. You decline to tell me——"

"Decline to tell you!" interrupted Mr. Castlemaine. "Cannot you use your eyes and your judgment, and see that it is mine?"

"I see that you are in possession of it, Uncle James; I see no farther. You decline to show me anything of the facts: my Uncle Peter declines; Knivett, the attorney-at-law, declines."

"Have you applied to Knivett?"

"Yes, last week."

The eyes of Mr. Castlemaine flashed fire. "How dare you do such a thing, sir, as attempt to interfere in my affairs? Tamper with men of business! By Heaven, I have a great mind to give you into custody!"

"Do not let us quarrel, Uncle James; suffer me to say what little I have to say quietly. I did not go to Mr. Knivett otherwise than openly. He said he could tell me nothing; and I recognized the weight of his objection—that he is your attorney. Being so, he of course cannot act for me."

"Perhaps you tried to bribe him," scoffed Mr. Castlemaine, who was foolishly beginning to lose his temper.

"I would not do any mean or dishonourable thing, Uncle James; I am a Castlemaine, and my father's son. But what I have to say to you is this, that matters cannot rest as they are: and I wish you fully to understand what my course will be if you do not give me the satisfaction I require, as to who is the true owner of Greylands' Rest. Only show me that it is yours, and I make my bow of departure from Greylands."

"You are pretty insolent for a young man!" retorted Mr. Castlemaine, looking down on him with scorn. "Do you suppose such an application was ever made to a gentleman before? You speak of your

father, my brother Basil : had some impudent stranger presented himself before him, and demanded to see *his* title-deeds, what would his answer have been, think you ? ”

“Circumstances alter cases, Uncle James. My case is different from the imaginary one that you put. Only satisfy me that the place is yours. I have a right to know so much.”

“You never shall know it : for your insolence, you shall never know more than you know now. Do your best and worst.”

“Then you will leave me no resource but to proceed,” returned the young man, who maintained his temper and his courtesy in a notable degree. “I shall employ the best lawyer I can call to my aid, and act on his advice.”

“Tush ! ” was the contemptuous answer. “Go and put in a claim to Parson Marston’s church—to the Dolphin Inn—to the beach itself ! Claim all, and see how far a lawyer will advance you in it.”

“I wish you had met me temperately, Uncle James. I only ask what is fair—to be satisfied. It is the talk of the neighbours now ; they say you ought to satisfy me ; they think you would do it if it were in your power.”

“What ? ” roared Mr. Castlemaine.

Had Anthony seen the storm he was provoking, he had surely not continued. He did not *wish* to irritate Mr. Castlemaine : all he wanted was to show him the reasons of his proposed attempted investigation—to prove to him that he was justified in what he meant to do. The truth was, the young man, who was by nature just, honourable, and kindly, who had never in his life attempted to take a mean advantage of friend or enemy, felt half ashamed and deeply grieved to be thus thrown into adverse contact with his newly found relatives ; and he sought to show that he had justifiable excuse for it.

“It is not my fault, uncle, if the people thus give their opinion : I did not ask for it, or provoke them to it. What they say has reason in it, as it seems to me. When the popular belief prevailed, that my grandfather would not leave his estate away from his eldest son, Basil, and when it was never known how he did leave it, or to whom, or anything about it, save that his second son remained in possession, why, then they talked. It would be a satisfaction to the public as well as to me, Uncle James, if you will suffer the truth to be known.”

It was not often that the Master of Greylands allowed anger to overpower him. In his younger days he had been subject to fits of intemperate passion, but time and self-control had well-nigh stamped the failing out. Perhaps until this moment he had believed it had left him for ever. His passion rose now : his face was scarlet ; his clenched hands were kept by force down to his side, lest they should deal a blow at Anthony. *Them*, so far, he controlled, but not his tongue : and he poured forth a torrent of abuse.

"Go back to where you came from, insolent, upstart braggart," were the words he finished up with. "You are no true son of my brother Basil; ill-doing though he was, he was not a firebrand, striving to spread malignant dissension amid a peaceable community."

"Uncle James, I shall never go back until I have come to the bottom of this matter," spoke the young man firmly: and, it may be, that his unruffled temper, his very calmness of bearing, only served to irritate all the more Mr. Castlemaine. "The best man of law that London will afford I shall summon to my aid: he must force you to show the title by which you hold possession of the estates; and we shall then see which has the most right to it, you or I."

The words inflamed Mr. Castlemaine almost to madness. With a fierce oath—and bad language, though common enough then, was what he was rarely, if ever, betrayed to use—he lifted his right hand to strike. Anthony, startled, got away.

"What have I done to merit this treatment, Uncle James?" he remonstrated. "Is it because I am a relative? You would not, for shame, so treat a stranger."

But the Master of Greylands, flinging back a word and look of utter contempt, went striding on his way, leaving his nephew alone.

Now it happened that this contest was witnessed by the superintendent of the coastguard, Mr. Nettleby, who was walking along the path of the neighbouring field behind the intervening hedge, bare at that season. He could not hear the words that passed, but he saw they were angry ones, and that the Master of Greylands was in a foaming passion. Calling in at the Dolphin Inn, he related before one or two people what he had seen: and Anthony, when he returned, gave the history of the interview.

"I'm sure I thought Mr. Castlemaine did strike you, sir," persisted the officer.

"No, but he would have liked to," said Anthony. "I stepped back from his hand. It is very foolish of him."

"I think he would like to kill Mr. Anthony, for my part, by the way he treats him," said John Bent. But the words were only spoken in the heat of partisanship, without actual meaning: just as we are all given to a hasty tongue on occasion. However, they were destined to be remembered afterwards by Greylands.

Somewhat later, John Bent and his guest were standing at the front door, talking together of the general perplexity of things. The sun was setting in the west in beautiful clouds of rose colour and amber, showing the advance of evening. John began to think he had better be laying the cloth for the parlour dinner, unless he wanted his wife about him. And—here she was! her cherry-coloured ribbons right over his shoulder.

At that moment, careering down the road on his way from Grey-

lands' Rest, came Harry Castlemaine on his spirited horse. His over-coat was rolled up and strapped on the saddle, and he looked as though mounted for a journey.

"Going out a pleasuring, Mr. Harry?" cried the landlady, as he reined-in.

"Going out a businessing," corrected the young man, in his free and careless manner, as he nodded and smiled at Anthony—for he did not share in his father's discourteous behaviour to their new relative, though he had not yet made advances to any intimacy. "A beautiful sunset, is it not?"

"Very beautiful," replied Anthony.

"I am bound for Newerton, Mrs. Bent," resumed Harry. "Can I do anything for you there?"

"Nothing, thank you, sir."

"What, not even choose you some cap ribbons? Newerton ribbons, you know, take the conceit out of those at Stilborough."

"You must always have your joke, Mr. Harry! As if a fine young gentleman like you would trouble himself to choose an old woman's ribbons!"

"See if I don't bring you some! Meanwhile, John, suppose you give me a glass of ale, to speed me on my journey."

The landlord brought the ale, handing it up on a waiter; somewhat to his own discomfort, for the horse was prancing and rearing. Harry Castlemaine drank it; and with a general nod round, an intimation that he should return on the morrow, and a wave of the hand to his cousin, he rode away.

Anthony went round the corner of the house to look after him. Not being anything great in horsemanship himself, he admired those who were. He admired also the tall, fine form, the handsome face, and the free, frank bearing of Harry Castlemaine; and a hope in that moment rose in his heart that they might become good friends if he remained in England. He stood and watched him up the road until its bending hid him from view. His way lay past the Grey Nunnery, past the coastguard station higher up, and so onwards. Newerton was a town of some importance at about ten miles distance.

The remaining events of the evening, so far as they concerned Anthony Castlemaine, were destined to assume importance and to be discussed for days and weeks afterwards. He took his dinner at six, John Bent waiting on him as usual; afterwards, he sat alone for an hour or two in deep thought. At least, Mrs. Bent, coming in to take away his coffee-cup, assumed him to be deep in thought, as he did not speak to her: an unusual thing. He sat between the table and the fire, his elbow resting on the former and his fingers pressing his temple. The landlady had never seen him so still, nor look so solemn; there was a cloud as of some dread care upon his face—she declared so to

the world afterwards. Could it have been that in those, the last few hours of his life, on earth, a foreshadowing of the dreadful fate, about to overtake him, was presented in some vague manner to his mind? It might have been so.

About nine o'clock he suddenly rang for the landlord to fetch his inkstand and paper-case, which he had left in his bedroom; and then he wrote a letter, sealed it as he had the one in the afternoon, and put on it the same address. John Bent came in to look to the fire.

"I have made up my mind to get another interview with Mr. Castlemaine before I apply for legal advice," spoke Anthony.

"Bless me!" exclaimed John Bent: for the words surprised him.

"Yes. I have been thinking it well over from beginning to end; and I see that I ought to give my Uncle James one more opportunity to settle it amicably, before bringing the dispute openly before the world, and causing a scandal. He was in a passion this afternoon, and perhaps did not quite understand me: when he shall have had time to reflect he may be more reasonable."

John Bent shook his head. In his own mind he did not believe that fifty fresh appeals would have any effect on Mr. Castlemaine.

"I say this to myself," went on Anthony: "Whether Greylands' Rest is his by right or not, he is in possession of it. Nobody can deny that. And I have tried to put myself in imagination in his place, and I see how cruel a blow it would seem if a stranger came to seek to deprive me of it. I might be as angry as he is."

"Then, sir, do you intend to leave him in possession of it?" returned the landlord.

"No, no; you do not comprehend. I must enforce my claim: if the estate is mine, I will never yield it—to him, or to anyone. But it may be his: and I think it is only just to offer him one more opportunity of privately satisfying me, before I take any proceedings. I shall do so. If I cannot see him to-morrow, I will write to him fully."

"The meeting might only lead to another quarrel, Mr. Anthony."

"Well—yes—I have thought of that. And I fear he would injure me if he could," added the young man, in a dreamy manner, and speaking to himself, instead of to his landlord. "There: don't put more coal, please: it is too warm."

John Bent went away with his coal-scuttle. He remarked to his wife that their inmate did not seem in his usual good spirits. Mrs. Bent, trimming one of her smart caps at the round table by the best kitchen fire, answered that she knew as much as that without being told; and that he (John) had better see that the servants were properly attending to the company in the public room.

It was considerably past ten, and the company—as Mrs. Bent called them, which consisted principally of fishermen—were singing a jovial song, when Anthony Castlemaine came out of his parlour, the letter in

his hand. Just as he had posted the one written in the afternoon, so he went over to the box now and posted this. After that, he took a turn up and down the beach, listening to the low murmuring of the sea, watching the moonbeams as they played on the water. It was a most beautiful night; the air still and warm, the moon rather remarkably bright. That Greylands' Rest was his own legally now, and would soon be his own practically, he entertained no doubt, and he lost himself in visions of the pleasant life he might lead there. Thus the time slipped unconsciously on, and when he got back to the Dolphin, the clock had struck eleven. John Bent's company were taking their departure—for the house closed at the sober hour of eleven—John's man was shutting the shutters, and John himself stood outside his door, his hat on his head and a pipe in his mouth.

"A lovely night, sir, isn't it," he began. "A'most like summer. I've been finishing my pipe outside on the bench here."

"Lovely indeed," replied Anthony. "I could never tire of looking at the sea yonder."

They paced about together before the bench, talking; and presently extended their walk up the hill. Mr. Nettleby's residence, a fair-sized, pretty cottage, stood back from the road in its garden, just opposite the Grey Nunnery, and Mr. Nettleby, smoking his pipe, was at the outer gate.

When that fatal night was gone and past, and people began to recall its events, they said how chance trifles seemed to have worked together to bring about the ill. Had Anthony Castlemaine not written that letter, the probability was that he would never have gone out at all; on returning from the post and the beach, had the landlord not been outside, he would at once have entered: and, finally, had the superintendent of the coastguard not been at his gate, they would not have stayed abroad.

Mr. Nettleby invited them in, hospitably offering them a pipe and glass. He had business abroad that night, and therefore had not retired to rest. They consented to enter "just for a minute."

The minute extended to the best part of an hour. Once seated there by the fire, and plunged into a sea of talk, they were in no hurry to move again. Anthony Castlemaine accepted a pipe, John Bent refilled his. The former took a glass of sugar-and-water—at which Mr. Nettleby made a wry face; John Bent had a glass of weak Hollands-and-water, which lasted him during the visit: he was no drinker.

The conversation turned on various matters. On the claims of Anthony to Greylands' Rest; on the social features and inhabitants of Greylands. Under a strong injunction of secrecy, Mr. Nettleby imparted certain suspicions that he was entertaining of a small hamlet called Beeton, a mile or two higher up the coast. He believed some extensive smuggling was carried on there, and he purposed paying a

visit to the place that very night, to look out for anything there might be to see. Anthony inquired whether he was extensively troubled by smugglers, and the superintendent said No, considering that the coast lay so convenient for Holland and other suspicious countries.

They all went out together. It was twelve o'clock. Mr. Nettleby's road lay to the left; theirs to the right. However, they turned to accompany him a short distance, seduced to it by the beauty of the night.

"In for a penny, in for a pound," thought John Bent. "The missis can't go on more if I stay out for another hour than she'll go on now."

But they did not walk far: just to the top of the hill, and a short way beyond it. They then wished the officer good-night, and turned back again.

The Friar's Keep looked ghostly enough in the moonlight. Anthony Castlemaine glanced up at its roof, dilapidated in places, at its dark casement windows. "Let us watch a minute," said he, jestingly, "perhaps the Grey Monk will appear."

John Bent smiled a grim smile. They had passed the entrance to Chapel Lane, and were standing within the thick privet hedge and the grove of trees which overshadowed it. Not that the trees gave much shadow at that season, for their branches were bare.

"Tell me again the legend of the Grey Monk," said Anthony. "I partly forget it."

John Bent proceeded to do as he was bid. But he had scarcely begun the narrative when the sound of approaching footsteps struck on their ears, and his voice involuntarily died away into silence. At the first moment, they thought the superintendent was returning.

But no. The footsteps came from Chapel Lane. They drew more closely within the cover of the hedge, and waited. A gentleman, walking fast and firmly, emerged from the lane, crossed the road, passed in at the gate of the chapel ruins, and thence to the Friar's Keep. Very much to the astonishment of John Bent, and somewhat to that of Anthony, they recognized Mr. Castlemaine.

"He is going in to take a look at the sea by moonlight," whispered Anthony. "I'll go after him. I will. And we'll have it out under the moonbeams."

Before John Bent could stop him—and, as the landlord said later, an impulse prompted him to attempt it—the young man was off like a shot, entered the gate in the wake of his uncle, and disappeared amid the cloisters of the Friar's Keep. The Master of Greylands must have emerged safely enough from those ghostly cloisters, since he was abroad, and well, the next day as usual: but the ill-fated Anthony Castlemaine was never again seen in this life.

CHAPTER VIII.

COMMOTION AT STILBOROUGH.

ON that same fatal Tuesday—and fatal it might well be called, so much of evil did it bring in its train—there was commotion at Stilborough. Disagreeable rumours of some kind had got abroad, touching the solvency of the bank. Whence they arose, who had originated them, and what they precisely meant, nobody knew, nobody could tell: but they were being whispered about from one man to another, and the bank's creditors rose up in astonishment and fear.

"Is it true? It cannot be. *What* is it—what's amiss? Not possible for Peter Castlemaine to be shaky. Where did you hear it? I'd trust the bank with my life, let alone my money. But it's said that some gigantic speculation has failed. Nonsense! the bank would stand twenty failures: don't believe a syllable of it. Well, rumour says the bank will stop to-morrow. Stop to-morrow! What shall we do for our money? Don't know. I shall get mine out to-day."

The above sentences, and others similar to them, might be heard from different people in the streets of Stilborough. Those who were ultra-cautious went into the bank and asked for their money. At first Thomas Hill paid: he thought the demands were only in the regular course of business: but in a short while he saw what it was—that a run upon the bank was setting-in, and he went into Mr. Peter Castlemaine's private room to consult his master. Fortunately the rumours had only got afloat late in the afternoon, and it was now within a few minutes of the usual time of closing. Not that, earlier or later, it could have made much difference in the calamity; but it saved some annoyance to the bank's inmates.

Had the bank been solvent, it would, of course, have kept its doors open, irrespective of hours and custom; being insolvent, it closed them to the minute, and the shutters too. Had Mr. Peter Castlemaine been able to meet the demands for money, he would have been in the public room, with a clear face, reassuring the applicants; as it was, he bolted himself in his parlour. The clerks drew down the shutters and shut the doors against the public: two or three of the young men, who had to go out with letters or messages, got out through the private entrance. Back went Thomas Hill to his master, knocking at the door when he found it fastened.

"It is only me, sir. All's safe."

Peter Castlemaine opened it. A change, that the faithful old clerk did not like, was in his face. Hill's own face was scared and white enough just then, as he well knew; but it could not have the peculiar, sickly, shrunken look he saw on his master's.

"Where are they, Thomas? Is it really a run?"

"Really and truly, sir. What an unfortunate circumstance! A few days, and you would have tided it over."

"But where are they all?"

"Outside in the street, kicking and thumping at the doors and windows; a great crowd of them by this time, and getting a bigger one every minute. We managed to get the doors shut, and then put down the shutters."

Mr. Castlemaine drew his hand across his aching brow. "I think this must have been caused by Fosbrook; he may have let an incautious word drop."

"He'd not do it, sir,"

"Not intentionally; for his own sake. I knew it boded no good when I found he meant to stay on at the Turk's Head. Alas! alas!"

"There has not been a regular stoppage," said Thomas Hill. "And if we can manage to get assistance, and open again to-morrow morning——"

"Don't, Hill," interrupted the banker, in a tone of painful wailing. "Don't speak of hope! There's no hope left."

"But, sir, when the remittances, which we expect, come——"

"Hush! look here."

Mr. Peter Castlemaine pushed an open letter towards his clerk. The old man's hands trembled as he held it; his face grew whiter as he mastered the contents. Hope was indeed gone. The worst had come. An embargo, or lien, had been laid in London upon the expected remittances.

"Did you get this letter this morning, sir? Why did you not tell me? It would have been better to have stopped then."

"I got it ten minutes ago, Thomas. It was sent from town by a special messenger in a post-chaise and four; which, of course, the estate will be charged with. He came, by mistake I suppose, to the private door; or perhaps he saw the crowd round the public one; and he gave the letter into my own hands, saying he would take my instructions back to town to-morrow morning, if I had any. All's over."

Too truly did Thomas Hill feel the force of the words. All *was* over. But for this last great misfortune, this lien upon the expected remittances, they might have weathered the storm. The few past days had gone, on pretty quietly, and every day, passed without exposure, was so much gained. The Master of Greylands, when applied to by his brother for a loan, had listened, and placed at the bank's disposal a fairly good sum: not enough, not half enough, for what it was wanted to stop, but still a great help.

"Even now," began Thomas Hill, breaking the depressing silence, "even now, sir, if a meeting were called, and a statement of facts properly laid before the creditors, they might consent to allow time."

"Time!" echoed Mr. Peter Castlemaine. "What, with this yelling

crowd clamouring at the door!—and with Fosbrook in the place!—and with a lien on all the forthcoming remittances! And,” he added, the shrunken, grey look on his countenance becoming more perceptible as his voice dropped to a whisper—“and with the discovery at hand of the use made of the Armannon bonds! The last closing hour has come, Thomas, and nothing can save me.”

Thomas Hill took off his spectacles to wipe the mist away. The failure of the bank, and the disgrace attaching to these pecuniary misfortunes, seemed as nothing, compared with the guilty shame that must fall on his master.

“They may prosecute me,” breathed Mr. Peter Castlemaine, from between his dry and ashy lips.

“No, no,” burst forth Thomas Hill. “They’ll never do that, sir. Think how you have been respected! And besides—so far as I can understand the complication—there will be money to pay everybody.”

“Every man will be paid in full to the uttermost farthing,” spoke the banker emphatically. “I sat up over my books nearly all last night, making my calculations, and I find that there will be funds to meet all claims in time. Not any over perhaps; but there will be so much as that.”

“And to think that this miserable trouble should intervene!” cried Thomas Hill, wringing his hands. “There will be my six thousand pounds, sir, to help you with the expenses, and that.”

Peter Castlemaine shook his head to the last sentence, but he made no denial in words. He seemed to have neither words nor spirit left, and sat leaning his brow upon his hand. The once fine fresh colour, that was natural to his cheeks, had faded away, though its traces might be seen still. One might have fancied that a thin veil of grey had been flung over the healthy bloom. In all his long experience, Thomas Hill had never, to his recollection, seen a man change like this.

“You look ill, sir,” he said. “Let me get you something to take.”

“I feel ill,” was the answer. “I ought to have confronted those people just now in the other room, and should have done so, but that I felt physically incapable. While I was reading the letter brought by the London messenger, a sharp, curious pain seized me here”—touching his left side. “For some minutes I could not move.”

“Is the heart all right?” hesitated the clerk—as if he were afraid to breathe the question.

“I do not know. During the past twelve months, since these troubles set in, I have had a good deal of fluttering there: pain too at times.”

“You should consult a doctor, sir. Don’t, pray, delay it.”

“Ay,” sighed the unfortunate man. “I suppose I should. When I get a little out of this fret and turmoil—if I ever do get out of it—I’ll see one. Lock the desk for me, will you, Hill?”

He held out the key, sitting as he was, and Thomas Hill locked the desk and returned the key to him. Strength and health seemed suddenly to have gone out of Peter Castlemaine.

"I'll go and get you a little warm brandy-and-water, sir. I'm sure you ought to take it."

His master did not say Do, or Don't, and the clerk went for it. Getting it mixed by Stephen—who looked frightened out of his senses by the commotion in the street—he carried in the glass of hot liquor, and the banker sipped it. It seemed to do him a little good; he looked less entirely depressed.

"There's one thing I wanted to say, Thomas," he began. "That young man who came here last week—my brother Basil's son, you know."

"I've heard he is at Greylands, sir. Young Anthony, they say."

"Ay. Basil named him after his father. I should have done the same, had a son been born to me. He came here, asking me to tell him the particulars of how Greylands' Rest was left; and I fear I was a little short with him. I did not wish to be, I'm sure; but this—this trouble was lying on me heavily. The young fellow spoke fairly enough, and I daresay I appeared cross. I've thought about it since, lying awake at night, and I want you to tell him for me that I meant nothing, should you ever see him."

"But surely you will be seeing him for yourself, sir!" cried the clerk, thinking this a little strange.

"I don't know that I shall. Should James show him that he has no claim, he may be going off to France again: and as to me, why, how do I know where I shall be, or how things will go with me? You'll tell him, Thomas, that Greylands' Rest, so far as I know, is legally my brother's; if I thought my father had given it to Basil, I should not deem it right in James to hold it. But it's not likely James would, were it not his."

"Did you not know, then, how the estate was left?" asked Thomas Hill, in surprise.

"No; I did not trouble myself about it," was the banker's answer: and all this while, he seemed to be speaking as his faithful clerk had never before heard him speak. Instead of the shrewd, observant, intellectual man of business, whose every sense was keenly awake, he seemed weary and passive as a tired child. "I knew Greylands' Rest would not be mine; that if it was not left to Basil it would be James's. James stayed in possession of it, and I supposed it was his: I took that for granted, and did not question him. I believe surely it is his: that my father left it to him: and, Thomas, you tell the young man, this young Anthony, that it is my opinion. I don't think there can be a doubt of it. James ought to show him the vouchers for it: Basil's son has a right to so much. Only, don't say *that*: I do not want to interfere with James."

"It would be the easiest way of settling the matter, sir, if Mr. Castlemaine would do that."

"Of course it would. But then, you see, James never chooses to be questioned: he resents any attempt at it; always did. As a boy, I remember, nothing ever offended him like doubting his word."

At that moment there was heard a ring at the house door. The banker looked startled, and then seemed to shrink within himself.

"It is that Fosbrook!" he exclaimed. "I thought he'd be coming. I cannot see him. You go, and battle it out with him, Thomas: he won't browbeat *you*. Go! Don't let him come in here for the world."

But it was not Mr. Fosbrook. It was only one of the clerks, returning from his errand. Thomas Hill, seeing the state of nervous depression that his master was in, proposed to proceed at once to the Turk's Head, and hold there an interview with the dreaded creditor: and the banker seized upon it eagerly.

"Do, do!" he said. "There's no one I dread as I dread him."

As the clerk went out, he saw that many angry people lingered yet around the house and doors. He went among them: he begged them to be still for that evening, to leave matters in quiet until the morning, for that Mr. Peter Castlemaine was very ill and quite unable to see anyone. The baffled creditors showered down questions on the unfortunate clerk—who certainly felt the trouble as keenly as did his master. Thomas Hill answered them to the best of his ability: and at length, one by one, they took their departure, leaving the street clear and the house quiet.

"And, no sooner was this accomplished, than the banker's handsome barouche drove to the door, containing Miss Castlemaine and her chaperon, Mrs. Webb, who had returned to her post the previous day. Opposite to them sat the young lady's lover, William Blake-Gordon. All were in the highest spirits, talking and laughing as though no such thing as care existed in the world, and utterly unconscious of the trouble that had fallen on the house and the commotion that had reigned outside it. They had been to look over Raven's Priory, and Mary Ursula was enchanted with it.

"You will stay to dinner, William," she said, as he handed her out of the carriage. "Papa will be vexed if you do not."

He was only too ready to accept an invitation that would give him a few more hours of her sweet companionship. It was close upon the dinner hour—six. Stephen was holding the hall door open, with a long grave face: they passed him, noticing nothing.

"I will not be long, William," she whispered, running up to her chamber.

A few minutes later, and she came forth again, attired for the evening. Her dress was of rich blue silk; her cheeks had more colour in them than usual, the effect of pleasurable excitement; her bright hair was

disposed so as to set off the exceeding beauty of her face. Mr. Blake-Gordon stood in the gallery, looking at a new picture that some friend had recently made a present of to the banker. As she joined him, he drew her arm within his.

"It is a fine painting, Mary."

"And it is hung well for night," she observed, "for the rays of the chandelier just fall on it. By day its place is a little dark. Have you seen papa yet?"

"Not yet. There goes six o'clock."

Mrs. Webb, an elderly lady in black satin and point lace cap, came downstairs and turned into the drawing-room. Though a very dragon of a chaperon when necessary, she knew quite well when to join the lovers and when to leave them alone.

They began pacing the gallery, arm in arm; looking at this picture, criticising that. From paintings their conversation turned to what just then held a deeper interest for them—the future residence they expected to so soon enter upon, Raven's Priory. This room should be the favourite morning room, and that the favourite evening room; and the beautiful conservatory should have their best care; and there should always be a blazing fire in the hall, not a cold, bare, comfortless grate, as they had seen that day; and the gravel drive should be widened, and some rocks and ferns put on the right hand in that bare space—and so the dreams went on.

The clocks went on also. Mrs. Webb, reminded probably by her appetite, looked out once or twice; the butler and Stephen, aware that the dinner was waiting and the cook angrily demanding whether it was to be served to-day or to-morrow, passed and repassed out of the drawing-room. As to the lovers themselves, they were unconscious of clocks and reminding appetites; for love, as we all know, lives upon air. It was the custom of the house not to serve the dinner until the banker appeared in the drawing-room: on rare occasions business detained him beyond the hour.

So they paced on, those two, in their dream of happiness. And once, at the darkest end of the gallery when there was neither step nor sound near, Mr. Blake-Gordon stole a kiss from that blushing face, so soon, as he fondly hoped, to be all his.

"My dear, is your papa out, do you know?" questioned Mrs. Webb, appearing at the drawing-room door, as they again neared it. "It is half past six."

"Half past six!" repeated Mary, in surprise. "So late as that! No, I do not know whether papa is out or in. Perhaps he is busy in his parlour? There's Stephen: he may know. Stephen," she added, quitting the arm of Mr. Blake-Gordon, and advancing towards the man, "is papa below in his parlour?"

"There's no one in the parlour, ma'am, for I've been to look," was

the answer. "I saw my master go up to his chamber some time ago ; but I don't think he can be in it all this while."

"How long ago?"

"Just before you came home, ma'am."

"Oh, of course, your master cannot be there still," interposed Mrs. Webb, much interested in the colloquy, for she wanted her dinner frightfully. "He must have come down and gone out, Stephen."

"Very likely, ma'am."

"I am sure that Mr. Castlemaine has not come downstairs since we came in," observed Mr. Blake-Gordon. "If he had, I must have seen him : I have been here all the time."

Mary Ursula laughed. "I will tell you what it is," she said : "papa has dropped asleep on the sofa in his room. Twice lately he has done it when he has had a very tiring day."

She ran lightly up the stairs as she spoke, and knocked at the chamber door. The lamp that hung in the corridor threw its light upon the oaken panels, and upon her gleaming blue dress.

"Papa!"

There was no response, and Mary gently turned the handle, intending to open the door about an inch, and call again. That her father was lying on the sofa in a sound sleep, she felt as sure of as though she had seen him. But the door would not open.

"Papa! Papa!"

No, he did not awake, though she called very loudly. Hardly knowing what to do, she ran downstairs again.

"Papa must be in a very sound sleep, for I cannot make him hear, and the door is fastened inside," she said, chiefly addressing Stephen, who was nearest to her. "I daresay he has had a fatiguing day."

"Yes, ma'am, it *have* been fatiguing ; leastways the latter part of it," replied the man with an emphasis that they failed to catch. "Some rude people have been knocking here, and making a fine uproar."

"Rude people knocking here!" exclaimed Mrs. Webb, taking him up sharply. "What do you mean? What did they want?"

"I don't know what they wanted, ma'am : something they couldn't get, I suppose," returned the man, who had no suspicion of the real state of the case, for he believed the house to be simply a mine of wealth that could have no limit, just as children believe in the wondrous riches told of in a fairy-tale. "I know I should like to have had the driving of 'em off! Master did well not to see 'em."

"But—did papa not see them?" questioned Mary Ursula, surprised into asking the question by this extraordinary story.

"No : and that's what I fancy they made the noise over, ma'am. My master was not well, either, this afternoon, for Mr. Hill came running out for hot brandy-and-water for him."

What more would have been said, what doubt created, was stopped

by the appearance of Thomas Hill. He had just returned from his mission to the Turk's Head. Apparently it had not been a pleasant mission: for his face was pale with what looked like fear, and he, waiving ceremony, had come straight up the stairs, asking for his master.

"I must see him; I must see him instantly. I beg your pardon, dear Miss Castlemaine, but it is of the last importance."

Had Thomas Hill only waited a moment he would have heard that the banker was fastened in his room. They told him now. He gave one scared look around while taking in the words, and then bounded to the stairs.

"Follow me," he cried, turning his livid face on the men. "We must burst open the door. I know he is ill."

Mr. Blake-Gordon, the butler, and Stephens were up almost as soon as he. Mrs. Webb laid her detaining arm on the young lady.

"You must stay here, my dear; you *must*. They will do better without you."

"But what can it be, save sleep?" asked Mary Ursula, not knowing whether there was cause for alarm or not. "When papa is very tired he sleeps heavily. On Sunday night he dropped asleep when I was at the organ; and I could not at first awaken him."

"Of course; I make no doubt he has fallen into a sound sleep; nothing else: but it will not be seemly for you to go up there with them. Hark! the door has given way."

Sleep? Yes, at first they did think the banker was asleep. He lay on the sofa at full length, his head on the low pillow, his feet hanging down over the other end. A candle, which he must have carried up with him, stood on the drawers, and the wax candles in the dressing-glass had been previously lighted by the servants. Altogether there was a good deal of light. They looked at the banker's face by it: and saw—that the sleep was the sleep of death.

A gasping sob burst from Thomas Hill. He fell on his knees, the tears rolling down his face.

"My master! my dear master! Oh, my master, my master!"

He saw what it was, perhaps felt somewhat prepared for it by the previous events of the afternoon. The others were for the moment somewhat stunned: but they did not think it could be death.

"Run for a doctor," cried the butler to Stephen. "He's in a faint. Run for your life."

The butler himself did not attempt to run; he was too stout. Mr. Blake-Gordon and Stephen, both slender and light of limb, sped away without their hats. The butler raised his master's head.

"Please to ring the bell, sir, for some brandy," he said to Mr. Hill. "The maids must bring up some hot flannels, too."

"Is it possible that you can be deceived?" sobbed the clerk—"that you do not see that it is death! Oh, my poor master!"

"*Death!* come now, don't talk in that uncomfortable way," retorted the butler; not, however, feeling very comfortable as he said it. "What should bring death to the house in this sudden way? He is warm too. Do please ring the bell, sir."

The doctors came without delay, two of them; for Mr. Blake-Gordon brought one, and Stephen another. But nothing could be done. It was indeed death: and, the medical men thought it had taken place the best part of an hour before. The great banker of Stilborough, Peter Castlemaine, had ceased to exist.

But there was one momentous, dreadful question to be solved—what had caused the death? Had it come by God's hand and will?—or had Peter Castlemaine himself wrought it? The surgeons expressed no opinion at present. They talked in an undertone, but did not let the world share in their councils. Thomas Hill overheard one word, and it nearly sent him frantic.

"How dare you say it, gentlemen? Suicide! Mr. Peter Castlemaine would no more lift his hand against himself than you would. I would stake all the poor bit of life I've got left—which won't be much now—that it is his heart that has killed him. This very afternoon he complained of a pain there; a strange fluttering, he called it; and he looked white enough for a ghost. He told me he had felt the same pain and fluttering at times before. There cannot be a *doubt*, gentlemen, that it was his heart."

The doctors nodded, seemingly in assent. One thing appeared to be indisputable—that if the death was natural, no other cause than the heart could be assigned for it. The face of the dead man was calm and unruffled as that of an infant. But, one of the doctors whispered something about an "odour."

Mary Ursula came into the room when the medical men had gone. No tears were in her eyes; she was as one stunned, paralyzed: unable in her shock of bewilderment to take in the whole truth. She had deemed the room empty: but Thomas Hill turned round from the sofa at her entrance.

"He has had a good deal of trouble lately, my poor dear master, and it has been too much for him and broken his heart," he whispered in a wailing tone, the tears running down his cheeks. "God knows I'd have saved him from it if I could, my dear young lady: I'd willingly have died for him."

"What kind of trouble has it been?" asked Mary Ursula, letting the old man take her hands, and gazing at him with a terrified and imploring countenance.

"Money trouble, money trouble," answered the clerk. "He was not used to it, and it has broken his heart. Oh, my dear, don't grieve more than you can help!—and don't think about the future, for all I have shall be yours."

"You—think—it was heart disease?" questioned Mary Ursula, in a dread, imploring whisper. "Do you *really* think it, Mr. Hill?"

"My dear, I am *sure* of it. Quite sure. And I only wonder now he did not die in my arms this afternoon in the bank parlour when the pain and fluttering were upon him," added Thomas Hill, half-choked with his emotion. "There was a great clamour with the creditors, and it terrified him more than I thought. The fright must have struck to his heart, and killed him."

She sighed deeply. The same appalled look of terror clung to her face. The reassurance did not seem to bring her the comfort that it ought. For Mary Castlemaine had overheard that one covert word of suspicion breathed by the medical men: and she had, and always would have, the awful doubt lying upon her heart.

It was a dreadful night for her, poor bankrupt girl—bankrupt in happiness from that hour. Mrs. Webb persuaded her to go to bed at last; and there she lay, getting through the hours as the unhappy do get through them. But, miserable though it was, it would have been far more so could she have seen, as in a mirror, what had taken place that night at Greylands in the Friar's Keep—the cause of the disappearance of Anthony Castlemaine.

CHAPTER IX.

A CURIOUS STORY.

A BRIGHT and cheery morning with a soft westerly breeze. The flowing sea sparkled in the sunlight; the little boats danced upon its waves; the birds on the land sang merry songs to one another, cheated into a belief that spring had come in.

There had been commotion in the streets of Stilborough on the previous day, and especially around the banker's door, as we have already seen; but that commotion was as nothing, compared with the stir that was this morning agitating Greylands. For a report was running wildly about, that some mysterious and unaccountable disaster had happened to Anthony Castlemaine.

Anthony Castlemaine had disappeared. There was no other word, save that, applicable to the event: he had *disappeared*. And as Greylands had taken a warm fancy to the young man, it rose up in some agitation. Almost with morning light the village was being searched for him and inquiry made. People turned out of their cottages, fishermen left their boats, some of the Grey Sisters even came forth from the nunnery: all eagerly asking what, and how much, was true.

The originator of the rumour was John Bent. He did not seem to know a great deal more than other people; but nobody, save himself, knew anything at all. The Dolphin Inn was besieged; work was at a standstill; Mrs. Bent allowed even her servant Molly to stand listening, with her arms akimbo, unproved.

The story told by John Bent was a curious one. And, it should be intimated that, but for the fears stirring within the landlord's own breast, the disappearance at this early stage would not have been thought so much of. But John Bent had caught up the fear that some fatal harm had chanced to the young man: in fact, that he had been—murdered! The landlord could not account for this strong impression; he acknowledged that; but it was there, and he freely spoke it out. The substance of the tale he told was as follows.

After Anthony Castlemaine had darted across the road and through the gate, in the wake of his uncle, the Master of Greylands, as previously related, John Bent stood still, watching for a minute or two, but could not see or hear anything of either of them. He then, finding the night air somewhat cold, stamped up and down the path, not losing sight of the opposite gate and waiting for Anthony to come out of it. Close upon this, there rang out the report of a pistol. It was accompanied, almost simultaneously, by an awful cry; the cry of a man in agony. John Bent wondered where the pistol came from and what it meant, but he never thought to connect either cry or pistol with Anthony Castlemaine. The time passed: John Bent began to find this waiting wearisome; he thought what a long confab his guest was enjoying with Mr. Castlemaine, and hoped they were settling matters amicably. By-and-by, a sailor staggered past—for he had been taking somewhat more than was good for him—towards his home in the village. He was smoking; and John Bent took his own pipe from his pocket, filled it, and lighted it by the sailor's. The pipe consoled John Bent, and the minutes passed somewhat less tediously: but when one o'clock rang out, and there were no signs of the young man, he began to think it very strange. "Surely they'd not stay all this while in that haunted Friar's Keep!—and not a place to sit down on, and nothing but cold pillared cloisters to walk or stand in!" cried John to himself—and he deliberated what he should do. The prospect of marching into the Friar's Keep in search of his guest was not altogether congenial to his taste, for John Bent did not like the chance of meeting ghosts more than Greylands did: neither did he care to proceed home himself and leave Anthony Castlemaine to follow at leisure. Another quarter of an hour elapsed; and then, finding there was no help for it, and quite tired out, he put on a bold face, and crossed over to enter the gate. But the gate was locked.

The gate was locked. And, had John Bent seen the whole row of high, substantial pailings suddenly lifted into the air, or thrown down to the earth, he would not have stood more transfixed with astonishment.

For that gate had never been known to be locked within his remembrance. There certainly was a lock to it, but it had always lacked a key. The latch was good, and that was all the fastening used, or

needed. John Bent stood with open mouth, gasping out his surprise to the air. "What on earth does this mean?"

He shook the gate. At least, he would have shaken it, had it been less substantially firm: but it scarcely moved under his hand. And then he set on and shouted at the top of his voice, hoping his guest would hear. "Mr. Anthony Castlemaine! Shall you be much longer, Mr. Anthony Castlemaine?"

The light breeze took his voice over the chapel ruins and carried its echoes out to sea; but there came back no answer of any kind.

"Well, this is a rum go," cried John, looking up and down, and round about, in his bewilderment. "Surely Mr. Anthony can't have come out and gone home!" he added, the unlikely notion flashing on him; for, when thoroughly puzzled we are all apt to catch at straws of improbability. "He *couldn't* have come out without my seeing him, and me never beyond view of the gate: unless—unless it was in the minute that I was lighting my pipe by Jack Tuff's, when I had my back turned. But yet—how was it Mr. Anthony did not see me?"

Unable to solve these doubts, but still hoping that was how it must have been, the landlord went home with a rapid step. Before he gained it, he had quite made his mind up that it was so; he fully believed his guest was sound asleep in his bed, and called himself a donkey for waiting out all that while. John Bent put his hand on the handle of his door to enter softly, and found it fastened. Fastened just as firmly as the gate had been.

"Where's Ned, I wonder?" he cried aloud, alluding to his man; and he knocked with his hand pretty sharply.

There was no more response to this knock than there had been to the shouts he had been lately sending forth. He knocked again, and shook the door. The moonbeams still played upon the sea; a white sail or two of the night fishing-boats gleamed out: he put his back against the door and gazed on the scene while he waited. No good, as he knew, to go round to the front entrance; that was sure to be closed. John knocked for the third time.

The window above his head was flung open at this juncture, and Mrs. Bent's night-capped head came out.

"Oh, it's you, is it!" she tartly cried. "I thought, for my part, you had taken up your abode in the road for the night."

"Ned's sitting up, I suppose, Dorothy. Why does he not open the door?"

"Ned will not open the door till he has my orders. A pretty decent thing this is, for a respectable householder of your age to come home between one and two in the morning! If you are so fond of prancing up and down the road in the moonlight, filling a fresh pipe at every trick and turn, why don't you stay there till the house is open in the morning?"

"Jack Tuff must have told you that!"

"Yes, Jack Tuff did tell it me," retorted Mrs. Bent. "I stayed at the door looking for you till half-after twelve. And a tidy state *he* was in!—his nose touching the ground, a'most, every step he took!"

"Just let me come in, Dorothy. I've not stayed out all this while for pleasure—as you may be sure."

"You've stayed for aggravation perhaps; to keep people up. Where's Mr. Anthony Castlemaine?"

"He's come home, isn't he?"

"I daresay you know very well whether he is or not," returned Mrs. Bent from her window.

"But, Dorothy woman, it is for him I've been waiting. He went into the Friar's Keep, and he's never come out again—unless he came when I did not see him."

"The Friar's Keep!" repeated the landlady, in the most ridiculing tone she could use. "What excuse will you invent next?"

"It is no excuse: it's true. We saw Mr. Castlemaine go in there, and Mr. Anthony ran over and followed him, saying he'd have out the quarrel under the moonlight. And I stood cooling my heels outside, waiting for him all this while, till I began to think he must have come out and passed me unseen. He *has* come home, has he not?"

"He is *not* come home," said Mrs. Bent.

"Well, let the door be opened."

As the story sounded a mysterious one, and Mrs. Bent had her curiosity, and as her husband, moreover, was a staid man, not at all given to this kind of offence in general, she allowed him to come in. He gave her a summary of the story, she wrapped in a warm shawl while she stood to listen to it and to make her comments. Anthony Castlemaine had not come home; she had seen nothing at all of him, or of anybody else, tippy Jack Tuff excepted.

A kind of scared feeling, a presentiment of evil, crept over John Bent. For the first time he began to wonder whether the pistol-shot he had heard had struck the young man, whether the agonised cry was his. He went into Anthony's bedroom, and saw with his own eyes that it was empty. It was not that he questioned his wife's word; but he felt confused and doubtful altogether—as though it were not possible that Anthony could be absent in this unaccountable manner.

"I must go back and look for him, wife."

"You'll take the key with you, then," said Mrs. Bent; who, for a wonder, did not oppose the proposition: in fact, she thought it right that he should go. And, back went John Bent to the Friar's Keep.

He did not at all like this solitary walking, lovely though the night was; he would rather have been asleep in bed. The Grey Nunnery lay steeped in silence and gloom; not a single light shone from any of its windows: a sure sign that just now there could be no sick inmates

there. John Bent reached the gate again, and the first thing he did was, to try it.

It yielded instantly. It opened at his touch. And the man stood not much less amazed than he had before been to find it fastened. At that moment the sound of approaching footsteps in the road struck on his ear; he turned swiftly, his heart beating with eager hope: for he thought they might prove to be the steps of Anthony Castlemaine.

But they were those of Mr. Nettleby. The officer was returning from his mission of night supervision, whatever it might especially be. John Bent met him, and told his tale.

"Nonsense!" cried the superintendent, after he had listened. "They would not be likely to stay in those deserted ruins—and the Friar's Keep is no better than a ruin. Are you sure it was Mr. Castlemaine you saw go in?"

"Quite sure. But I can't think what he could want there."

"You don't think you were dreaming?" asked Mr. Nettleby, who, by this time, evidently fancied the tale was altogether more like a dream than a reality. "I don't believe the gate has a key; or that it ever had one."

He was examining the gate as he spoke. The lock was there as usual; but of any sign that a key had been in it that night, there was none. Crossing the ruins, they stood looking out over the sea; at the line of glittering moonlight, at the distant boats catching their fish. From that they went into the Friar's Keep. It lay open to the chapel ruins. Pillars of stone supported the upper floor—the floor which the spirit of the dead-and-gone Grey Friar was supposed to haunt. It was rather a ghostly-looking place altogether; the intersecting pillars and the arches above, and some open arches facing the sea, where a little light streamed through. They could not *see* the sea from this place, for the outer wall was nearly as high as they were; but not so high as the arches, and the light and the salt fresh smell of the sea came wafting in. There they stood on the stone floor of those cloisters—as people had fallen into the way of calling them—and shouted out the name of Anthony Castlemaine. Neither sight nor sound came back in answer: all was quiet and lonely as the grave: there was not the slightest sign that anyone had been there.

"If they *did* come in here, as you say," observed Mr. Nettleby, with that same ring of disbelief in his voice, "I'll tell you what it is, Bent. They must have come out again at once, and gone home up Chape Lane together to Greylands' Rest."

This view of the case had not presented itself to the mind of John Bent. He revolved it for an instant, and then saw that it was the most feasible solution of the problem. But he did not feel quite satisfied; for it was difficult to fancy Anthony Castlemaine would so go

off without telling him. Still he accepted it; and he and the officer quitted the Keep, and turned their steps homeward.

"Did you get upon the trail of any smugglers at Beeton?" asked John Bent.

"No," said Mr. Nettleby, rather savagely, for he had had his night's work for nothing. "Couldn't see any traces of them. I do suspect that Beeton, though. I believe it contains a nest of the lawless wretches!"

He turned in at his own gate as he spoke, and the landlord was speedily at home again. Anthony Castlemaine had not come in.

Before eight o'clock in the morning, John Bent, feeling doubtful and uneasy, went up to Greylands' Rest. He noticed that all the blinds were down, and some of the shutters closed. Miles, the servant man, was outside the back-entrance door, shaking mats.

"I thought none of you could be up yet," began the landlord. "I'm sure the house looks as though somebody had died in it."

"And somebody has died, more's the pity; though not in the house," replied Miles, turning his face, full of grave concern, on the speaker. "A messenger was here soon after six this morning to fetch the master to Stilborough. Mr. Peter Castlemaine died suddenly last night."

The landlord was shocked. He could hardly believe it. "Mr. Peter Castlemaine dead!" he exclaimed. "It can't be true, Miles."

"It's too true," returned Miles.

"But he was so strong and healthy! He had not a trace of illness about him!"

"Ay. But they say it was the heart."

"Well, it's sad news, any way, and I'm sorry for him," said John Bent. "Is young Mr. Castlemaine here?"

"Not just now. He'll be home sometime this afternoon. He went off to Newerton yesterday on business."

"I don't mean him—Mr. Harry. I mean Mr. Anthony Castlemaine."

"What should bring that young man here?" retorted Miles, who made a point of sharing in all the prejudices of his master.

John Bent told his tale. It was listened to with disbelieving and resentful ears.

"My master in at that there blessed scared place, the Friar's Keep, at twelve o'clock at night! Well, I wonder what next you'll say, Mr. Bent?"

"But I saw him go in," returned John Bent.

"It couldn't have been him. It's not likely. What should he want there? When us servants went to bed at ten, the master was in the Red Parlour. As to the young man you speak of, that he has not been anigh the house, I can answer for."

John Bent felt as if he were in the midst of a fog, through which no light could be seen. "You say Mr. Castlemaine is at Stilborough, Miles?"

"He went off there soon after six. And wasn't he cut up when he

heard the news about his brother!" added Miles. "His lips and face had no more red in them than *that*"—pointing to a snow-drop under the wall. "He looked just like a man who has got a shock."

It was of no use for John Bent to linger. Anthony Castlemaine was not to be heard of at Greylands' Rest.

The Dolphin Inn was a crowded place that day, and its landlord the centre of attraction. People were in and out incessantly, listening to the singular history. Numbers flocked to the Friar's Keep, and to every other spot in Greylands likely or unlikely for a man to be hidden in dead or living; but there was no trace anywhere of the presence of Anthony Castlemaine. Setting aside the disappearance, the tale itself excited wonder; and that part of it relating to the entrance into the chapel ruins of Mr. Castlemaine, and the subsequent sound of a shot and cry, and of the locked gate, was received by some with incredulity. Opinions were hazarded that the landlord's eyes might have deceived him; his ears and his fingers played him false; that Mr. Castlemaine must have been altogether a myth; the supposed locked gate been only his awkwardness, and the shot and cry nothing but the scream of a sea-bird. In this one latter point, however, John Bent's account was established by other testimony; coming, singular to say, from the Grey Ladies. It appeared that Sister Mildred was very ill that night, and two of the others sat up with her, Sister Mona and Sister Ann. The room of Sister Mildred faced the sea, and was the last room at the end next the chapel ruins. As the ladies sat there watching in the stillness of the night, they were suddenly startled by the sound of a shot, and by a scream as from some one wounded.

In the afternoon Mr. Castlemaine returned from Stilborough. The commotion rendered it impossible for him to remain long ignorant of what had taken place, and of the manner in which his name was mixed up with it. He could not fail to see that some suspicion must attach to himself in the public mind; that the alleged story, taken in conjunction with previous facts: the pretensions of his nephew to Greylands' Rest, and their hostile meeting in the fields earlier in the day: must inevitably excite doubt and comment. Proud, haughty, and self-contained though the Master of Greylands was, this matter was of too grave a nature, and might bring too many unpleasant consequences in its train, for him to ignore it. He deemed it well to throw himself forthwith into the battle; and he went straight to the Dolphin. On his way he encountered Commodore Teague. The latter had been out since early morning, in his cutter—as he was apt to call that sailing-boat of his—and had but just heard his story. A few exchanged sentences, and Mr. Castlemaine proceeded to the inn.

"What *is* this absurd story?" he demanded of John Bent, lifting his hat, as he entered the best kitchen, to the knot of people assembled there. I cannot make head or tail of it."

For the fiftieth time, at least, the landlord recounted the history. It was listened to with breathless interest, even by those who had done nothing but listen to it for many previous hours.

"And do you expect sensible people to believe this, John Bent?" were the first answering words of the Master of Greylands.

"It's true, whether they believe it or not," said John. "It was yourself, sir, was it not, that we saw pass into the chapel ruins?"

"I!" scornfully repeated Mr. Castlemaine. "What do you suppose should take me to such a place as that at midnight? If all your points are as correct as that, Mr. Bent, your story will not hold much water."

"I said it was not likely to be Mr. Castlemaine," spoke up the superintendent of the coastguard. "I told Mr. Bent so at the time."

"I put it to you all generally whether it *was* likely," pursued Mr. Castlemaine, glancing defiantly about him.

"All I can say is this," said John: "that if it was not Mr. Castlemaine, my eyes must have strangely deceived me, and young Mr. Anthony's must have deceived him. The night was as light as day!"

"Eyes do deceive sometimes," remarked Mr. Castlemaine. "Mine have on occasion deceived me at night, good though their sight is. And of all deceptive light, the moon's light is the worst."

"Sir, if it was not you it must have been your wraith," said John Bent, evidently not inclined to give in. "You passed close by us sideways, coming out of the Chapel Lane, and crossed the road in front of us. Had you just turned your head sharp to the right, you must have seen us under the hedge."

"Was it the Grey Friar, think you?" asked Mr. Castlemaine. And John Bent did not like the banter or the suppressed laugh that went around.

"That some one crossed from the Chapel Lane, may be true: for I do not see how you could purely imagine it," conceded Mr. Castlemaine. "But it was not I. Neither can I understand or conceive what anybody should want in the chapel ruins at that time of night. We are most of us rather given to shun the place."

"True, true," murmured the room.

"And the locked gate," proceeded Mr. Castlemaine, "how do you account for that? Where did the key come from to lock it? According to what you say, John Bent, it would appear that Mr. Anthony Castlemaine must have locked it; since you maintain that no one went in or came out subsequent to himself. If he locked it, he must have unlocked it—at least, that is the inference naturally to be drawn."

"I say that the gate never was locked," put in Mr. Nettleby. "The latch might have caught at the minute, and caused Mr. Bent to fancy it was locked."

"You may as well tell me I don't know when a place is open and when it's shut," retorted John Bent.

"And the pistol again!—or gun!" remonstrated Mr. Castlemaine. "It does not stand to reason that people should be firing off guns and pistols at midnight. I fancy that must be altogether a mistake——"

"The Grey Ladies can speak to that much, sir," interrupted Mrs. Bent. "As Sister Ann, here, can tell you."

Mr. Castlemaine turned on his heel and brought his eyes to bear on Sister Ann. She was sitting in the corner near the clock, her basket as usual in her hand. For she had come out to do errands, and been seduced by curiosity into the Dolphin, to take her share in the gossip.

"Yes, sir, we heard the pistol, or gun, whichever it was, and the human cry that came with it," she said to Mr. Castlemaine. "Sister Mona and I were watching in Sister Mildred's room—for the fever was very bad upon her last night and she was restless and wandering, poor lady! It was all quite still. I was knitting and Sister Mona was reading; you might have heard a pin drop indoors, or out; when there burst upon our ears a loud shot, followed by a human cry. A loud scream it was, making me and Sister Mona start up in terror."

"It was like a death-scream," said John Bent. "And I cannot," he added, looking at Mr. Castlemaine, "get it out of my head that it was his scream—young Mr. Anthony's."

"From what direction did it come?" asked Mr. Castlemaine of the landlord.

"I can't tell, sir. I was walking about on the opposite side of the road, and I thought it came from seaward. It sounded very near."

"It sounded to us as though it came from the chapel ruins, or from the strip of land below it," said Sister Ann. "We did not hear any more."

"And I did not think at the time to connect that shot and scream with Mr. Anthony Castlemaine," pursued John Bent. "I do now."

"Well, it is altogether a most extraordinary and unaccountable affair," remarked Mr. Castlemaine. "Strange to say, I was abroad last night myself and near the spot, but not as late as you describe this to have been. Between ten and eleven I went down the lane as far as the Hutt. Teague was, I had heard, purposing to go out in his boat for a few hours to-day; and I, not having been very well lately, thought I should like to go with him, and went down to say so. I stayed and had a pipe with him, and I think it must have been half-past eleven when I left."

"And did you go straight home from the Hutt, sir?" asked John Bent, eagerly.

"Straight home from the Hutt's door to my door," emphatically replied Mr. Castlemaine.

"And did not go anigh the other end of the lane at all?—nor the Friar's Keep?"

"Most certainly not. I went direct from Teague's house to mine." That Mr. Castlemaine was candid in stating this little matter spon-

taneously, when he might have concealed it, his hearers mentally acknowledged, and it told in his favour. But it did not lessen the perplexity, or the mist that the affair was shrouded in. He turned to depart.

"I shall at once institute a thorough search, and if necessary summon the law to my aid," said he. "Not that I fear any real harm has befallen my nephew Anthony; but it will be satisfactory to ascertain where he is. I fancy he must have gone off somewhere, perhaps on some sudden and uncontemplated impulse. It may be, that he is given to take these impromptu flights; as was his father before him, my brother Basil."

Mr. Castlemaine passed out as he spoke, with a bend of the head to the company, and turned towards Greylands' Rest. He was looking pale and ill; they could but notice it throughout the entire interview, and his face had a worn, sad cast of sorrow on it, never before seen there.

"He has brought that look back from Stilborough," remarked John Bent. "There are bad fears, it's whispered, about his brother's death. But as to Mr. Anthony's having walked off in that promiscuous manner, it's the foolishlest thought that ever was spoken."

Commodore Teague in his blue sailor's costume came looming in, his hands in his pockets. He had made haste down from the Hutt (having gone there to carry his gun and sundry other articles from his boat) to hear the details of the mysterious story: or, as he chose to express it, the wrongs and the rights on't.

So John Bent once more recounted the particulars, assisted by the tongues of the company—for they did not stand in awe of this listener as they did of Mr. Castlemaine. The commodore listened with incredulity, not to say ridicule.

"Look here, John Bent, you may tell that tale to the marines. I can explain away some on't myself. Bless my heart! [to think you folk should be running your head again' all them marvels, when there ain't none to run 'em against. That gun that went off was mine."

"Yours."

"Twas. And as to Mr. Castlemaine, you no more saw him go into the Friar's Keep than you saw me go. Last night, I was smoking my pipe and cleaning my gun—for I meant to shoot a few birds out at sea to-day—when who should come knocking at the Hutt door but Mr. Castlemaine. He'd been feeling out of sorts, he said, and thought a sail would do him good, and would like to go with me to-day—for it seems the whole parish had heard I was going. With all my heart, I answered; I'd be proud of his company. He sat down and took a pipe: smoking's contagious, you know: and we talked about this and that. When he left, I watched him up the lane to his house; and I'm quite certain he did not come down again. After he was gone, I got to my gun again, which I had laid aside when he entered. It struck twelve before I

finished it. After that, I loaded it, took it to the door, and fired it off into the air. That was the shot you heard, landlord."

"And the cry?"

"Never was any cry to hear. 'Twas fancy. I made none, and I know I heard none. This morning word was brought me that Mr. Castlemaine had been fetched to Stilborough, and I took out Ben Little in the boat instead."

But this explanation did not go for so much as it might have done. The commodore was in the habit of telling the most incredible sea yarns; and faith, in that respect, was rather wanting in him. Moreover, the strong impression on John Bent's mind was, that it was a pistol-shot he had heard, not a gun. Above all, there remained the one broad fact of the disappearance: Anthony Castlemaine had been alive and well and amidst them the previous night, and to-day he was not. Altogether the commotion, the dread, and the sense of some mysterious evil increased; and lying upon all hearts, more or less, was a suspicion of the part played in it by Mr. Castlemaine.

Dusk was approaching when a horseman rode past the Dolphin: Mr. Harry Castlemaine on his return from Newerton. Seeing what looked like an unusual bustle round the inn door, he pulled up. Molly ran out.

"What's agate?" asked Mr. Harry. "You seem to have got all the world and his wife here."

"It's feared as it's murder, sir," returned simple Molly.

"*Murder!*"

"Well, sir, Mr. Anthony Castlemaine went into the Friar's Keep last night, and have never come out again. It's thought he was shot there."

"Shot! Who shot him?"

"'Tain't known, sir. Some says it was Mr. Castlemaine that was in there along of him. A dreadful cry was heard."

Harry Castlemaine drew up his haughty head. But that she was a woman, ignorant and stupid, and evidently unconscious of all the words might imply, he might have struck her as she stood.

"And there's dreadful news in from Stilborough, Mr. Harry, sir," she resumed. "Mr. Peter Castlemaine was found dead in his chamber last night. He died quite sudden, poor gentleman, shut up in his room, and not a soul anigh him to watch his last breath."

It was almost too much. His uncle dead, his cousin disappeared, his father suspected he knew not yet of what! Never a more cruel moment than that had dawned for Harry Castlemaine.

(To be Continued.)

FEMALE SUFFRAGE.

WOMAN has hitherto been nominally called the weaker sex, and yet in all great movements of the world's history she has taken a leading, nay often a ruling part.

Who came forward joyfully to welcome the glad tidings of the Gospel, while the Jewish Pharisee still stood entrenched behind his high wall of self-sufficing prejudice and old world traditions, and while the heathen philosopher still sat in the schools, disputing over empty sophistries? Who marched in the van-guard of the noble army of martyrs? Was it not woman? To show a reverse picture; who in the terrible days of the Revolution led the frenzied whirl of the Carmagnole along the streets of Paris? Who sat by the scaffold and, with unflinching eye, counted each head that fell? Was it not woman?

So long as woman went quietly her way through life, taking her own rightful share in it, she was strong; but is it not probable, that now, when, with restless vanity, she struggles to make her own what belongs to men she will become weak? In this matter of Female Suffrage, which just at the present is making so many women's pens and women's tongues red hot, it seems to us very likely that woman, if she reaches her object, will lose much more than she will gain. She will gain, it is true, the right of giving one vote in her own person, but she will lose the command over many other votes.

Let us, for a moment, suppose that Female Suffrage is established in the land. Women will flock to the polling-place. They will satisfy their morbid pride by elbowing their way through a crowd as well as the broadest shouldered yeoman there. They will bear testimony to their political creed, whatever it may be. They may think this a grand day for them, but, before and after it, their political influence will quickly begin to melt away. Men will soon grow to look upon their female friends as antagonists, against whom they must be on their guard, even in hours of family or social intercourse. Husbands and sons, and brothers, yes, and even lovers and admirers, will soon get too cautious to let themselves be drawn on by imperceptible degrees, in flowery bands of woman's artful weaving, till, before they know it, they have left the narrow path of conservatism for the liberal cause.

The political influence of woman has always made up for its indirectness by the breadth of its extent. This was best shown in the drawing-rooms of old France. There, while the gentlemen talked of state affairs, the ladies sat by, playing with a bouquet or a lap-dog, seeming to hear nothing and yet really hearing everything, until suddenly their pretty mouths spoke a word or two, which appeared to be dropped carelessly,

but which always exactly hit the point in discussion. These unexpected shots seldom failed to tell; but had the ladies entered into the battle of tongues, like the male disputants, their influence would have been most likely quite lost. In this way, however, these French women managed to bias, more or less, the opinions of most men of their acquaintance. It is exactly this sort of indirect influence which we fear female suffrage might destroy for woman. Let us glance back at the last century in England, when women, according to the lights of the present day, are said to have enjoyed no fragment of political power.

In the first place, there rises up before us Georgina, the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire. One wave of her white hand brings to the liberal side as many recruits as does the eloquence of Sheridan. One smile of hers is a more potent bribe in an election than a handful of golden guineas. The member for whom she is canvassing becomes as no one in the business. It is she whose name is on every tongue; she who is stared at in the streets; and the would-be honourable, but, in this case, truly honourless, gentleman, stands meekly behind her, with not even the crown of his hat visible above her high toque and waving feathers. Lady Crewe, again, is as much mixed up with the story of the Whigs at that time as Burke or Fox. All the great men of the party crowd around her as if they drew light and strength from looking at that lovely face, which even the hand of time could not touch.

As for Fanny Burney, with what freedom in that lively picture she gives of Warren Hastings' trial does she speak out her opinions to Windham! With what arrogant stiffness does the haughty little lady bow to Burke. What do those ladies say to these examples who cry out that their sex has always been shamefully set aside in politics? Were not such women as those a more creditable production for any age than the women who spend their time shrieking and weeping over their grievances and clamouring for what is hardly worth having?

In France, where the Salic Law does not allow the crown to rest on a female head, it has always been noticed that women have had more to do with Government than in any other country in Europe. Indeed, (we are sorry to say it, because it would establish an unpleasant likeness between the female sex and those pigs on their road from Cork to Kinsale famous in Irish story), but, indeed, we believe that nothing makes women so active in any matter as being told that they are to have no hand in it. Remembering this, we wonder that men do not at once insist on Female Suffrage; for then women would cease to take any interest in politics, and husbands, at least upon such subjects, would be allowed to have opinions of their own. As it is, we should like to see the tradesman or farmer who, after ten years of married life, would presume to vote on the conservative side with a radical methodist wife at home; or the member of Parliament who would dare to vote for the disestablishment of the Church when his three fair daughters and their

mamma bow and cross themselves daily in a holy of holies of Ritualism.

There is, indeed, on record the story of a bold Scottish Laird, in 1745, who, though his wife wore the white cockade and her heart beat high for bonnie Prince Charlie, yet, nevertheless, declared he would lead forth his clan to reinforce the Duke of Cumberland's ranks. But how did this hapless husband pay for his rashness? The morning was come for marching out to the fight. The highlanders were assembled in the castle-yard. The pibroch sounded shrill for the onset. What with loyalty and what with whisky, the air was full of shouts for King George. In the hall sat the chieftain at breakfast. He was in high good humour, the venison stakes were so tender, and glory seemed just then so easy to win. There too at his side sat his lady, lovely and smiling, but it was the smile of the treacherous sky of the South before a storm. The Laird had finished, like a true Scotchman, with an oatcake and marmalade, and was just going to rise to put on his bonnet and say adieu, when his wife by some dexterous carelessness upset the whole contents of the tea-urn over his legs. Farewell now all his dreams of fame. For many a day he must be a prisoner in his own castle. Doubtless the lady, knowing, like most of her sex, how to temper justice with mercy, was winsome and gracious enough throughout that dreary time when he had nothing to do but stare from the window at the misty hills; but doubtless also the husband had had a lesson which made him take good care never to get into conjugal hot water again.

But if the influence of the wives of England is great over their husbands' opinions, may it not be said that the mothers of England hold in their hands the electioneering notes of the next generation. Will the boy whose heart has been fired by his mother to kindle at the glorious story of William the Silent dying for a nation's freedom, ever give a vote that will raise up tyranny in the land? Will the boy who has learnt to lisp at his mother's knee the sweet old Bible words, and to find in them his God, ever help to place among his country's rulers a man who will not uphold pure religion? It is a precious and an awful thing, this power of the mother; for through it she may take part in the good or ill of the nation long after her soul has flown to the eternal land. Can any one compare the petty distinction which the suffrage would give to woman to such a solemn dignity as this? We fear that the women who clamour for the suffrage and for other so-called freedoms for their sex are forgetting this their rightful vast responsibility in the infinitely smaller responsibility they wish to take upon themselves.

What France wants is mothers, said Napoleon. God grant that sooner or later those words may not have to be spoken of England!

It is a proud thing for an old woman, as she sits by her fireside in the softly carpeted drawing-room, or the cozy parlour behind the shop, or

the neat farm kitchen—it is a proud thing for her, on the day of election for county or borough, to be able to say, “My six sons have all votes and I know they will be on the side which all my life I have thought the right one.” If women are ambitious, here is surely something worth their striving after.

And what shall we say to her who, remembering the great Apostle's words, has chosen the single life?

As a vision of sweetness and of mercy, she glides from house to house in the crowded, busy town, or trips, like a friendly spirit, up and down the muddy lanes of the remote country village. She stands in the manufactory, and teaches the workmen to find music in even each puff of the engine and each stroke of the hammer. She sits on the stile near the farmer and his labourers, and shows them how to read about Heaven in every leaf and blade of grass around. She goes boldly into the navvies' shed by the line, where evil words are flying about so thickly, and at her coming all is hushed. She sits in the hospital by the bed of the broken down gentleman, who has come there through misuse of God's good gifts, or of the strong man struck down in the midst of his sin. To all those men she is a woman, and yet more than a woman; she is one who administers, and yet one to whom homage must be paid. Whether she is a woman who clings to old forms, who would not move with a finger the smallest stone in the ancient building of Church and State, or whether she is one of broader thought and more all-embracing charity, she is certain in her goings in and out among these men to instil into them her own opinions.

Then, again, the influence is great of her who holds the pen; that peaceful weapon, which fits so well the female hand, but which is, nevertheless so mighty in its sway. She has put to clothe her thoughts in words and they find their way into thousands of homes. English boys and girls, growing up in lands beyond the sea, learn to think with her thoughts. They who have never seen her face or heard her voice speak lovingly her name. She is ruler over hearts; perhaps can make us swell in anger or melt in pity. The ideas she gives forth are discussed by the roadside and in the snug library. Her mind permeates other minds and tinges them with its colour. We fully believe that if a band of the literary sisterhood were to agree to try to abolish any one of the few real grievances of their sex, such as the right of a worthless husband to take his wife's earnings, they could make such a stir in public opinion that it would be abolished.

And can women with this wide influence stoop to pray and cry out for so comparatively small a privilege as the suffrage? Surely a Queen might as well come down from her throne to beg for a gaudy paste diamond to be added to her crown. Even the single woman, without any especial calling, has in her hands a strong power for leading others into her way of thinking, if only she will boldly, yet modestly,

have opinions of her own and use this power with tact. Can she not make herself a dear, familiar guest in many a home, where she will be called for in every season of joy as in sorrow? Do not the young men confide to her their secrets, as one less tearfully anxious than a mother, and less like a mistress than a sister? Has she not in each house one little boy at least who is her own peculiar darling, and who listens to her stories and comes to her in all his tiny troubles, and loves her almost as he loves his mother? So that in her the Scripture words seem fulfilled, inasmuch as she that is desolate has more children than she that has a husband. And will she not in all this close home-intercourse stamp at least some of those among whom she moves with her own individuality? She must surely be a very characterless woman if she does not. The middle-aged woman who has openly chosen the single life has more influence with the generality of her male friends than the married woman or the girl who wishes one day to be a wife. It is often a great relief to a man to have a familiar talk with a kindly, sensible woman, who has, he knows, no thought of catching him, as the phrase goes, and of whom no one can be jealous. Here, again, the single woman, if she is fond of power, has opportunities of letting her opinions filter artfully, drop by drop, into men's minds until they often become saturated by them. In this manner French women of the past frequently governed the rulers of the country, and through them all France.

Thus in different ways and from different causes we see that nine-tenths of the so called lords of the creation are under female influence. With such great, wide power in her hands, woman is surely lowering her dignity by crying out so wildly for a thing of so comparatively slight value as the suffrage, which, after all, cool common sense seems to point out to be more man's business.

If any women who read this are discontented with the position of their sex in society, let them remember that woman's mission in the world is in reality a much holier and more spiritual mission than that of man, and that if man chooses members for an earthly senate, she, if she is doing well her duty, moulds husband and son, and lover and friend into a candidate for Heaven. Let women not try to turn themselves into men. Remaining women, but good and useful and high-hearted women, they shall always govern three-quarters of the world.

ALICE KING.

RECOLLECTIONS OF A GOVERNESS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE LADY SHAKERLEY."

MAY 4th, 1836.—A lovely day. Lessons ended, we went into the garden. I sat with my work under the great cherry-tree, which was one sheet of white bloom, whilst Helen raked the long border and tied up the large clumps of white lilies and scarlet lychnis, which will look so beautiful together by-and-by. Suddenly Captain Langton appeared, come to say farewell before going out with his regiment to the East Indies. He had seen Sir William and Lady Dacre, and now came to seek us; seek *her*, I should say. Helen threw down her rake, and, seating herself on the grass under the cherry-tree, began caressing his beautiful Skye terrier.

Captain Langton moved closer to her, and I heard him say, "Shall I leave Coonach to you, Helen?"

"Oh, please do," she answered. But Coonach seemed to have understood the question, and, releasing himself, went a little nearer his master.

Captain Langton answered the mute request. "My poor old fellow, you must stay and take care of her for me." Holding my child's hand in his, he put it on Coonach's head, and, bending over her, said, "Love my dog, love me, Helen."

Helen only answered him by again caressing Coonach, who, hanging his head, submitted patiently, and at length, with a long yawn, laid himself down between the old master and the new mistress. Helen was still half sitting, half kneeling on the grass, and Captain Langton was leaning on the oak seat, which surrounded the old cherry-tree. At last she said, half to herself: "So stupid of them to order your regiment abroad when there are so many others. I wish the king had sent one of them."

He laughed, and then gently took one of the long curls that fell on her shoulder, drew it out admiringly (indeed it was beautiful hair), and kissed it.

"We have been friends from children, Helen," he said.

"Yes, Guy."

"And I have loved you all my life, Helen," he continued, in a lower voice; but still I could hear, and I gave a little cough, and thought how badly her French exercise would be done after this; but she only answered, "Yes, Guy; I know Frances used to say you liked me better than either of your sisters. I have liked you better than Edward, for he is so tiresome sometimes, and you have always been so good to me."

"You are a child still, Helen," he replied. And the tone of his voice betrayed disappointment.

"No, indeed, I am not. I am nearly seventeen, and you can't call that a child, really, Guy."

"You will be grown up before I return : try and remember me, Helen."

She clasped her hands on Coonach's head, and thought Captain Langton did not see the two great tears drop ; but I did, and he did too, and, putting his hand gently on the soft dark hair, he said something I could not hear. Helen looked up, and I heard her say, "Oh, Guy, I shall never forget you." Just then a shower of white blossom fell all around them.

He shook my hand warmly, and bade me take care of Helen : then he turned once more to her. She had risen from the grass, and as she held out her hands he bent down and kissed her.

I wonder if I could have prevented that kiss ! It might have been better for both. And so they parted.

I must here give a slight sketch of the Dacre and Langton history.

Captain Langton was the eldest son of Mr. Langton, the largest proprietor in the parish, or indeed in the county. It was a very large parish. Langton Hall was quite six miles from Cherry Court. Helen and Edward were the only children of Sir William and Lady Dacre.

Sir William's father, partly from hereditary extravagance, partly from non-business habits, partly from a bad agent, who himself grew the richer as the old property diminished, had left his estate so encumbered that Sir William, on succeeding to it, had no resource but to remain in what originally was intended for the Dower House, in which he had lived ever since his marriage ; and the Manor House, with the beautiful park, farms, &c., was let to a Mr. Crayford, son of the very agent who was supposed to have lined his own purse at the expense of his employer. The old Sir William had lived and died there, and the full extent of his extravagance was not known till after his death.

Mr. Crayford's early years had been spent in trade, and some lucky speculations had made him far richer than most of the old landed gentry around him, whose pedigrees were in general much longer than their rent-rolls.

Letting the Manor House, the residence of the Dacres for many generations, had been a bitter pill to both Sir William and Lady Dacre, and though Mr. Crayford proved an excellent tenant, little or no intimacy subsisted for many years between him and Cherry Court.

His children were young at the time of their grandfather's death, and he hoped his self-sacrifice might be rewarded by his son's growing up, able to look forward to returning to the old home ; and though, as I said before, little cordiality existed between the new occupier and the proprietor, yet Sir William saw (he would not have allowed it for worlds) that Mr. Crayford was a good tenant, anxious to have all in good order ; the manor kept exactly as it always had been ; not a picture

changed, not a couch re-covered; meadows which, in the old Sir William's time, bore little else than rushes, were drained and improved, returning to the new comer liberal interest for all he expended. Farm buildings, with every modern convenience and improvement, gladdened the heart of bailiff and farmer. Cottages, with good and decent accommodation, were built, each with a bit of garden-ground allotted to it.

Mr. Crayford himself was not nettled at the reception, or rather non-reception, he met with in the county: it was what he had expected, and he made up his mind that some years must pass before any of the neighbouring gentry would at all associate with him. He only said to himself, "Give me time; time is all I require."

Between Edward Dacre and Mr. Crayford's orphan nephew, Harry Foster, a fine, high-spirited boy, there sprang up a friendship which increased as years went on; and though Mr. Crayford encouraged the intimacy, yet, as he saw Edward growing up much more likely to follow in the footsteps of his grandfather and great-grandfather than in those of Sir William, he constantly warned his nephew not to be such an idle dog as young Dacre. He wished the intimacy to continue for many reasons. Poor Sir William felt bitterly that his son was much more likely to spend a fortune than to gain one, and, with a heavy heart, renewed the lease to Mr. Crayford when Edward was sixteen.

And now to go on.

June 1.—It is settled that Edward goes into the army. I am afraid Sir William and Lady Dacre are not quite satisfied, but no other profession seemed to have any charm for him: the commission was offered and has been accepted. Young Mr. Foster, too, has decided on a military life, and Mr. Crayford has called several times, consulting and arranging, and offering to be of any use. Edward is so intimate with him, but I see Helen leaves the room if she possibly can. I am sure he admires her, but that is not wonderful: she is growing up handsomer than her mother was, but I wish I could see her less proud and contradictory. Edward rides Mr. Crayford's horses as if they were his own, and that annoys her: she rides poor old Whitefoot, and declares she prefers him to the best horse in the kingdom. It vexes her to see her brother accept a better mount than his father's own stable affords him.

July 4.—Edward came under our schoolroom window this morning with a little grey horse. Helen threw open the window and at the first moment exclaimed, "What a beauty!"

"Ha," said Edward, "I knew you would like him. Crayford says you may ride him and welcome; he is too slight for him or Foster, and he told me to give his compliments, and say he should be quite proud if you would try him."

The colour mounted to her forehead. "I am much obliged," she said, "but I would rather walk all the days of my life." She closed the window with a bang, and walked up and down the room.

"Helen, dear," I said, "you were at liberty to refuse, but you might have done so with common civility."

"I can't, dear auntie," she answered—she always called me auntie—"I can't be civil to that man. I feel up in arms against him. He always rubs me the wrong way, and then, dear, I'm like a cat, and I can't purr."

"Pride, Helen, only pride. I wish you could be more gentle. A meek and quiet spirit, my child, is of great price."

She gave me a kiss, and then, turning to Coonach, she lifted up the long, silky hair from his eyes, and said, "My doggie, she's been scolding me; I am gentle enough with you, and always will be, but I cannot be like a lamb; I was not born with one of those sweet tempers, and I cannot help it. I might as well be scolded for having black hair instead of red, mightn't I?"

"Helen dear, that's nonsense; and, what is worse, it is wrong."

Edward came back from the Manor House very much put out with his sister. "Crayford said he was sorry you were afraid to mount Grey Surrey," he said.

"Afraid!" she repeated, scornfully—"afraid!"

"Well, I had to say something; for what excuse could I give? But from his face I don't think he believed me."

I knew Helen was vexed with herself and Edward and Mr. Crayford and every one, for we walked half over the parish before she recovered, and then the subject was never referred to again. I often wonder how much my child thinks of that parting under the old cherry tree. I fancy I see a great difference; she is older in many ways. Poor Sir William gets weaker, and so little irritates him; and dear Lady Dacre has so much to distress her that "careful and troubled about many things" may truly be said of her.

October 20.—Edward's regiment is a very expensive one. I am sure he asks for more help than Sir William can afford. Lady Dacre looks quite careworn. I was searching for a book in the morning-room when Sir William said, "My dear, must you have that cheque for Miss Vincent to-day?" And Lady Dacre answered, not seeing me, "I really must; it is overdue some time." "I could not take it, dear Lady Dacre," I said. "Please do not think of it; not till quite convenient to Sir William. I want nothing. Helen is grown up; I am no longer required for teaching; but I could not leave you. Only give me a home and let me stay as long as I can be of any use to you and her."

Lady Dacre kissed me, and said she could not allow it, but I feel happier. I have no friends depending on me, and I love them too well to leave them now that they are not so prosperous as in former years.

January 5, 1837.—Three months and I have written nothing. Nothing pleasant to write about. I look with dread on Mr. Crayford's

frequent visits. I feel certain my poor Helen is the cause, though she escapes whenever she can. Sir William evidently likes him better, and his increasing inability to take any exercise makes him glad of visitors, and he always has Helen near him.

Lady Dacre came to my room last night. She put a purse in my hand. With tears in her eyes, she said, "It is not what you ought to have, but all I can give you now. I hope for better times when my boy is more steady." Then she sat down and burst into tears. "He is quite reckless," she said, "in money matters ; just like his grandfather, unable to control any fancy. He cannot bear to be thought poor. His allowance is long overdrawn. We have sent him all we can, to prevent his borrowing from any rogue who might be willing to lend him money." I tried to comfort her, hoped he might find it easier to resist temptation when he had been a little longer in the regiment, or when they went abroad. She was always trustful, and always thought things would turn out better than they seemed, and she grew more satisfied, apparently, before she left me. "Do not tell Helen, poor child," she said, when she wished me good-night. But Helen had noticed for some time that Edward's letters were opened with more anxiety than pleasure by his mother, and had wondered what could be the reason.

April 25.—Mrs. Langton died on the 12th, at Brighton. Before her death she desired a very handsome bracelet might be given to Helen, with her fond love. I wish Captain Langton had been near Edward, he might have advised him better.

May 4.—The cherry-tree is all in bloom again. Helen sits under it constantly with Coonach, though I warn her. The wind is still unusually keen for the time of year. I did not refer to this day last year, but I noticed that Coonach was more than usually petted. Somehow I feel as if some evil were hanging over our heads, and dread the way it may come, and the way it may be taken.

June 23.—The King died on the 20th, and the young Princess Victoria is our Queen : only ten days older than my Helen ! May God bless and guide her. "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

August 22.—The thunderbolt has indeed fallen, and on my poor child. Oh, that I could have borne any sorrow for her ! It was thus. She and I were in the schoolroom ; she was taking a likeness of Coonach, when Hawkins opened the door and said, "Mr. Crayford's in the drawing-room, and wishes to speak to you, Miss Dacre."

"Not to me," she said, carelessly ; "tell my mother, Hawkins."

"If you please, Miss Dacre, it was you Mr. Crayford wished to see," returned the old servant. "I believe it's something about Mr. Edward."

Helen rose hastily. "Come with me, dear," she said, "What in the world can it be about Edward ?"

I went down with her to the drawing-room. She entered eagerly.

"Has anything happened to my brother?" were her first words to Mr. Crayford.

"Your brother is quite well," Mr. Crayford replied; "but," and he looked at me and bowed, "I wished to see you for a few minutes on business connected with him. May I see you alone?" And he looked at me again.

"Miss Vincent may hear anything you can possibly have to tell me," Helen said in her proud way.

I would not leave my child, but, bowing to him, I went to the other end of the room, and stood by the bay window, looking out on the old cherry-tree.

"As you please," Mr. Crayford replied. "I know Miss Vincent is a valued friend, but this matter I thought you might prefer hearing alone."

"Pray go on," exclaimed Helen impatiently; "pray explain yourself, Mr. Crayford."

"Let me give you a chair, Miss Dacre," he said, and seating himself beside her, he put a letter into her hand. I saw her face crimson as she read it; then she rose and gave it to me without a word. It ran thus:—

"Dear Crayford,—I must have some money by the 15th of next month. I cannot apply again to my poor old father; indeed he has it not. You know my prospects; I will sign anything; the old place is mine at my father's death; for pity's sake lend me some money. Any interest you like, only let me have it, as soon as possible. If I get out of this scrape I'll turn over a new leaf, I will indeed.—Yours,

"EDWARD DACRE."

I gave it back; she refolded it slowly as she returned it to him. "I am very sorry that my brother should——"

"This is nothing, dear Miss Dacre," he said, putting the letter back into his note-book; "a mere trifle; I was quite willing to help him, from the deep regard I entertain for Sir William and Lady Dacre, and, if I might venture to say so, for yourself," he added in a lower tone. "The worst is to come, dear Miss Dacre. This is what I wish you to break quietly to Lady Dacre."

I felt frightened as he deliberately took another letter from his pocket-book and placed it on the table. "You will observe your brother mentioned no particular sum, so I sent him a cheque for £1,000, on my bankers,—I knew less would be useless to him—with a few words of advice regretting that he should have involved himself, hoping he would be more careful in future.

"Well," said Helen abruptly.

"Well, Miss Dacre, this morning I received that letter from my bankers, enclosing my cheque. Will you do me the favour to read it?"

She read aloud—

"Dear Sir,—Lieut. Dacre, —th Hussars, has presented the enclosed cheque from you. The amount is so large, we are unwilling to cash it without hearing from yourself. As Lieut. Dacre is known to us, we supplied him to the amount of £2,000, and should be glad to have your instructions at your earliest convenience.—Your obedient servants, Drawbill and Co."

"I don't understand," said Helen, when she finished reading, "you said you sent a cheque for £1,000, and they have given him £2,000. What is it? I don't understand."

He opened the cheque slowly and placed it on the table before her. She read again :

"Messrs. Drawbill and Co.—Please pay on demand to Lieutenant Edward Dacre, the sum of——"

She looked up hurriedly. "This is not *one* thousand, it is *ten* thousand," she said. "You have made a mistake!"

"I wish to Heaven I had," returned Mr. Crayford slow .

"Then who has?"

"I much regret to tell you, the 'one' has been altered into 'ten.' In the figures, the cipher has been added by"—and he stopped.

"By whom, sir?" she asked, her eyes flashing.

"By Edward himself," he answered, not looking at her.

She was recalled by Mr. Crayford's voice. "He should have had it. Large sum though it be, he should have had it! If he had only asked me, he should have had it—he need not have committed forgery."

"Forgery," repeated Helen, "forgery!"

Was it a dream? What was it? Poor child, she pushed back the hair from her forehead and recalled her scattered senses. It was true—it was quite real. "Forgery!" she said again.

"Indeed, yes, and what I now wish is, to consider how the consequences of this rash act may be averted," replied Mr. Crayford. "He could not remain in the army, and take his trial for forgery."

"Oh, Mr. Crayford," said my poor child, hiding her face in her hands, "it would kill my father." He made no reply.

She suddenly looked up, "He has not had *all* the money; they gave him £2,000, you see, not all. They are waiting for your orders, don't you see? Write to them; say, they are to give no more; won't that do?" she asked, eagerly.

"The act is the same," said Mr. Crayford, slowly. "Listen to me. I am quite willing to keep silent, and let this sad, rash folly of your brother's be a secret between you and me. I will tell my bankers it is my cheque. Anything you please, on one condition—I must have my reward!"

It was coming—I knew what he meant, and I could do nothing for my child!

"I don't understand," she cried, hoarsely; but I felt some glimmer of the truth was dawning on her, and that it was terrible.

Mr. Crayford walked to the door, then returned, standing before her. He said, "I am willing to shield your brother entirely, because he is your brother. I am willing to pay all his debts—all he has borrowed from your father—to set him free to begin life again—if you will be my wife."

"Impossible," she cried, rising indignantly. "You must propose some other terms—anything but that!"

"Ah, my dear Miss Dacre, nothing less will satisfy me. You must choose. I leave your brother's fate in your hands. Your brother's fate—your father's life—your mother's happiness—all rest with you. Believe me, this has been my dream for years. I ventured even to hope my long and deep admiration could be no secret to you. Think of Edward ruined—name blasted—the good old name—only to be mentioned in a whisper, by those nearest and dearest to him! And then remember, *you* can save him. One little word of encouragement—I will give you time—I will not hurry you—only promise—everything you ask shall be done—and my whole life devoted to you."

He ventured to take her hand. She withdrew it instantly. I must interfere now, I thought. "Will you be good enough to leave Miss Dacre now," I said, coming forward: "this has altogether been such a shock to her. She is unfit to give any kind of answer at present, and Lady Dacre must first be told."

"Certainly," he said, and he smiled; but I felt he was annoyed. "I will call in the afternoon." He held out his hand; she would not see it. "Good-bye for the present," he said gently to her, and left the room.

She sank back in to a chair and hid her face. No tears came; it was beyond tears: and I could do nothing for her; with all my love for my child, I was powerless. At last she said, "Marry him, marry that man! sell myself for money!"

"No, darling, not for money; if you do it, it is to save your brother from shame and your parents from grief; though I will not urge you Helen."

Lady Dacre entered unperceived by either of us. "Helen, dear," she said, putting her hand on her shoulder, "what has happened? What did Mr. Crayford want?"

She looked up, deadly pale; no words came. I opened the window, and let the soft fresh air blow in on her; Lady Dacre turned to me, and in a whisper asked, "Has he spoken?" I bowed my head; I felt choking too. She waited a few moments, and then said gently, "Helen, darling, do not accept him if you cannot like him."

"Oh, mother, mother, you don't know all. He never would have dared to—to—" gasped Helen, "if he had not had me in his power."

"In his power?" repeated Lady Dacre.

And then, calmly as she could, she told her all that had passed.

Lady Dacre shook her head, the tears rolling fast down her cheeks. I tried to leave the room, but she stopped me. "Don't go, dear auntie," as she used to call me when a girl, "don't go. You are a true friend, and feel for us in sorrow or in joy. Do not leave us now. I can never know joy again. Oh, my boy, my boy! what is poverty compared to this?" she said, sobbing. "I have known poverty for years, but shame and dishonour are hard to bear."

Helen seated herself on a low stool and laid her aching head on her mother's knee. "My poor child," said Lady Dacre fondly, "you have never given me a moment's pain, and am I to sacrifice you to hide his guilt? Mr. Crayford will pay all if you accept him?"

"Yes, mother, and no one will ever know what Edward did. I suppose he *did* do it?"

"It would kill your father," said Lady Dacre, slowly, "but—"

"Mother," said Helen suddenly, "have I not some money? I mean, shall I not have something at my father's death if I live so long? Can I give it all up to Edward now? to pay Mr. Crayford?"

"Helen, some of that money was raised to pay for his step. Edward was to pay it back: and lately he has had more, which he is to repay when he is of age, by cutting the manor wood. It was the only thing left us to do. He has had it, Helen, he has had it, there is no hope there."

"And, mother, your jewels? I remember them a long time ago in that dark blue case, lined with white satin; so beautiful!"

Lady Dacre only shook her head sadly. I had £900; but what was that? they were welcome to it: at that moment how I wished for thousands!

"Even if we had the money, nothing but your consent would keep Mr. Crayford silent, is it not so, Helen?"

"He said so, did he not, auntie?" I was obliged to say he had. "And if I let Edward bear his own burden?" Helen continued slowly.

"Oh, my Helen," interrupted her mother, "the shame, the disgrace!"

Helen thought her mother loved her less than Edward; that she could sacrifice her to screen his fault. It roused her pride, her besetting sin; it hardened her. So when her mother whispered something, of which I only caught the words "Guy Langton," she answered, "No," and Lady Dacre said, "Then, Helen, darling, you must save us, and Heaven will reward you, my child. Go to your own room now, and rest awhile."

She looked like a statue, so white and cold, as she closed the door.

He came again in the afternoon, and Lady Dacre tried to get a little delay for her child but Helen's promise he insisted on, as upon her answer depended the instructions he gave his bankers by that afternoon's post. After receiving her promise he trusted so entirely to her fulfilling it that he would not hurry her, or do anything that might vex

her. This was the substance of what he said ; so poor Lady Dacre again returned to Helen's room, and the look in her mother's eyes softened the poor little proud heart. She would do it for her mother's sake. Turning her face away, and hiding it on the pillow, she gasped, "Mother, I promise."

She went about as usual that evening, calm and collected, but so deadly pale I dreaded her fainting. Late at night I went to her room. Opening her door gently, I found her kneeling on the ground by the open window—such a lovely night it was, with the quiet stars looking down on her—sobbing her heart out. I bathed her face, made her go to bed, and was thinking what verse could comfort her, when she said, "Read me about Jephthah's daughter. And now, dear auntie, if you love me," as I closed the Bible, "never speak to me again about him or that cherry-blossom, unless you want to break my heart quite. I must do according to my vow, and you must pray for patience for me, and for me to be meek and gentle, which you know I never *have* been. Only don't speak of it, and don't pity me, or I shall break down altogether. I can't stand it."

And then I saw that Captain Langton, and that bright May-day under that cherry-tree, had been deeper in her young heart than I had suspected, and I doubted if I should tell Lady Dacre, or go to Mr. Crayford and throw her on his generosity ; but I remembered he had asked for no love from her, only that she should be his wife, and I felt it would be useless—that my child's fate was fixed. She was still so young—Captain Langton absent—Mr. Crayford's attachment sincere : I hoped for the best, and thought interference from me would be of no use either to my dear child or her mother. I pray this be not one of the things left undone recorded against me, for which I must give an account at the last.

August 24.—My poor Helen's engagement was announced yesterday. We were all surprised at Sir William's anger when Lady Dacre told him of it. Helen begged her father might never know the facts of the case. In his present state of health she would save him the pain of hearing Edward's guilt. It was noble of her, but it made my heart bleed that her self-sacrifice should not be known and understood, for at the first announcement Sir William roused himself up into a passion, all his old prejudices revived. "Confound the man!" he shouted, loud enough for me to hear in the next room ; "what is he, that he should think of marrying a Dacre ! And that's what he has been coming after, is it ? I wish I could horsewhip him, I do. And what did Helen say to him, eh ? What ? You can't mean it, Lady Dacre. Accepted him ! God bless my soul, why his grandfather made blacking-brushes, and his father was a thief ! Aye, by Jove he was, robbed the Dacres right and left. It's time I was out of the way, with my toes turned up to the daisies ; it is, indeed, Lady Dacre."

A low murmuring from poor Lady Dacre, and then Sir William broke out again. "Civil to him when he comes! You had better keep him out of my sight for a day or two. Confound him, I could not look at him now and be civil. 'Pon my word, I thought he came to see me. I did indeed! Give me my drops, my dear, give me my drops—you have quite done for me, quite."

I think Edward's letter to her, when he heard of her marriage, was the only thing that gave her a moment's pleasure. It showed her conduct was felt and understood by him, at any rate.

"Dearest Helen,—May God bless you. I never knew a moment's peace till I received mother's letter this morning. I understand all. Your most unworthy but loving brother, E. D.

Nov. 1.—My Helen married. She was married on the 24th. Mr. Crayford had promised not to be in a hurry—but he *was* in a hurry. He had promised to give her time, but he put it on Sir William's state of health, and wished the marriage to take place: perhaps it was better, if it *was* to be, that it should be over.

A very quiet wedding. Even Edward was not present; he was expected but did not arrive at the last. They went straight to Manor House. She preferred staying near Cherry Court, though Mr. Crayford offered to take her anywhere she liked. The evening before I found her in tears. She wiped them hastily away, and, taking Coonach up in her arms, she put him into mine. "I must leave him and all that behind, dear auntie. You take him, for my sake; I have said my good-bye to him now."

On Friday morning Coonach was gone! He was very uneasy all the night, and, after breakfast, nowhere could he be found; but in the afternoon, he was brought home. Poor fellow, he had actually found her out and gone to the Manor House, the servant said, howling and whining. My poor Helen hardened her heart, and sent him back to me; and I did not lose sight of him until yesterday. I thought he was safe whilst I was in church, but he made his escape, and was again at the Manor, and Helen keeps him. She wrote me a little note to say his joy at finding her again was so unbounded; and I am glad she has, for only those who care for animals know the blank the loss of a dog or a bird makes in one's life.

Nov. 8.—Dreadful tidings to-day. Edward is dead! The news was sent to Mr. Crayford. He told Helen, ordered the carriage, and allowed her to come alone to break it to her parents, which was kind and considerate. Oh, how I hope he may be able to make her happy! She left the carriage at the lodge, and walked on here; came in at the garden-door and up to the schoolroom. I could scarcely believe she had changed her name. "Hush!" she said, when I started up. "Oh, auntie, how can I tell papa? Edward is gone—thrown from his horse—killed!" I was shocked beyond words. Oh, how sad an end for that poor boy! Poor Edward, for whom she had done all that woman

could, gone ! and so suddenly. He rode so well, and was so fearless ; but a Captain Mortimer, who had won much money from the poor boy, had bet a large sum against his being able to ride a vicious horse that no one could master round the parade ground.

Edward took the bet ; he *did* get him round the parade-ground, and then, in triumph, put him at a high railing. The animal swerved suddenly, became unmanageable, and threw him : his head came violently against the curbstone, and he never spoke again. In his pocket was a memorandum :—" If I'm thrown, write to James Crayford, Manor House, Wernbury. Send the money to my father."

She stayed some hours with us. Lady Dacre asked if she was not astonished her father had borne the blow so calmly.

Helen had noticed in general he took things very quietly now. The little outbreak on hearing of her engagement was soon over, and it was the last. His memory is failing. We all see it better than poor Lady Dacre herself. The mother will feel her son's death the most. If the news had come a week sooner, would Helen have kept her engagement ? The thought torments me.

The carriage came for her, and I saw her look wistfully round the room. " I suppose I must go now," she said ; and in a whisper, as she kissed me, " If it could have been me, instead of poor Edward !"

Nov. 16.—Helen was in church to-day, a bride in deep mourning. I went to see her yesterday. Everything is beautiful about her, and Mr. Crayford evidently much attached. I do trust his devotion may make her happier in time. But she found he had the letter telling of poor Edward's death on the 24th, before their marriage—just what I fancied—and he kept it from her for a few days, he said, until he had further particulars. Coonach never growls at him now, I was glad to hear : he seems to feel Mr. Crayford and he have changed places, and that *he* is the visitor. But Mr. Crayford cannot get over his dislike to him ; it is a sort of curious antipathy he has to all dogs ; and yet he is very fond of horses. I saw he did not approve of Coonach always being close by Helen, sometimes on the couch beside her, and I really gave him credit for submitting to it so readily. She never moves but the poor dog follows her.

February 26th, 1838.—Nothing written since November. The year 1837 gone, and a new year well commenced. Shadows deepening round Sir William. My last words in November, I see, were about poor Coonach, and now I begin by recording his sad end.

I was staying a few days with Helen, and one morning I heard Mr. Crayford's voice loud and very angry. He generally was so imperturbable, I was astonished. He was coming in from the stables, and my room looked that way. I heard him say, " Have it done at once." A horrid thing an angry man is. I was glad Helen could not see him from *her* windows. Half an hour after I saw Helen's footman run to the stables.

In a few minutes he returned, and some of the men with him. The fact was some lambs of a new breed of sheep had been worried by a dog. As there was no other dog allowed at the Manor, poor Coonach was accused of it, and in the first burst of anger and annoyance Mr. Crayford ordered him to be hanged, and hanged he was. Repenting himself, he sent James as fast as he could to stop the cruel sentence. Alas, he was too late ; the deed was done.

Mr. Crayford was exceedingly vexed when he found his order had been executed, and, unable to tell Helen himself, he mounted his horse and went to attend some meeting at Wernbury, without coming to breakfast. It would have been better, perhaps, if he *had* told her ; and yet I can understand his shrinking from the task. At breakfast Helen asked for Coonach, and James mumbled something and retreated. A short time after she rang the drawing-room bell, and guessing poor Coonach was wanted, James point blank refused to be the bearer of the news ; so Stevens was obliged to come himself.

"I want Coonach," Helen said. Stevens put down a pot of hyacinths, began rubbing his hands and fidgeting with the newspapers.

"Will you tell James to bring him?" she added. Stevens left the papers, and began to retreat, but, advancing again, and again rubbing his hands, he said, "Three of the new lambs was worried last night, and two more badly hurt."

"Poor things !" said Helen, looking a little surprised.

"It was a dog as had done it," continued the butler.

"I suppose so. Shall we go out a little, auntie, it's so bright this morning?" Helen said, turning to me, looking her astonishment at the butler's loquacity. "Send Coonach, please."

Stevens rubbed his hands harder than ever. I thought he was very odd. "I'm sorry, ma'am," he said, standing first on one leg, then on the other ; "I believe there has been a mistake, a great mistake. The shepherd told master it was a dog as did it, and as Coonach is our only dog, you see, ma'am——"

"Nonsense," said Helen ; "what has my Coonach to do with the lambs?"

"I'm exceedingly sorry, ma'am, and I'm sure master is very much put out indeed, ma'am, about it."

"About what?" said Helen, puzzled ; "oh, about the lambs ; I see."

"Yes, ma'am, about the lambs, but more particular about Coonach, poor fellow. You see, ma'am, a dog as once takes to worrying of sheep never leaves it off, never. But, of course they should have made sure it was Coonach as did it, they should."

I turned quite sick. I felt convinced poor Coonach had suffered, and that must have caused Mr. Crayford's anger in the morning.

"You don't mean to say they have done anything to my dog?" exclaimed Helen.

"I'm very sorry, ma'am, but Coonach being the only dog about here, they never thought of no other, and there is but one thing to do with a dog that takes to sheep worrying, and that's why James could not bring him to you at breakfast, ma'am."

She put her hand on my arm. With quivering lips she said, "What have they done? ask him."

"Yes, ma'am, poor fellow," said Stevens, turning to me; "master would have given a good deal to have stopped it, but it was too late. Master said he was to be buried, and have a handsome stone put over him."

"I will not have him touched by any one of you; I will do it myself."

She was too much hurt, too angry to cry. So angry, so hurt, she appeared quite calm. She went upstairs, put on her bonnet and cloak, and I did the same, and we went together to the stables. There lay poor Coonach—dead—hanged. James had laid him on a horse-rug, and closed the poor loving eyes, and he almost looked as if asleep.

"Is he quite——" she began, and then her tears fell fast. The men were all standing near, ashamed and distressed. The man who had done the deed, I believe, had slunk away. They all looked sorry for the pale quiet mistress, standing over her dead favourite.

"Oh, yes, ma'am," James said, "quite dead, and I'm sure he was innocent."

"Lift him up for me, please," Helen said. "There, thank you; he's not heavy now—no, I would rather take him myself," and she carried him straight down to Cherry Court. I followed, but she would not let me help her. The two miles never seemed so long to me before, and she walked on, without a word, except declining my offers of assistance, her poor heart too full, too sore for any words. Straight to the old cherry-tree she went, and laid her burden down, and there the old gardener dug his grave, and poor Coonach was buried—just where she sat that May morning, with the white blossoms falling over her!

"Oh, my Helen," said her mother, putting her hand fondly on her shoulder, "you told me you did not care for Guy Langton!"

"I was angry and miserable, mother; but truth will out sometimes." And then my poor child burst into a flood of tears.

I intended returning to Lady Dacre that day, but Helen entreated me not to leave her, and we went back to the Manor House together. Our dinner was very silent. Mr. Crayford spoke to me, and Helen spoke to me, but she originated no remark to him, and declined everything he offered her. I was not sure if I had not done harm by returning.

In the drawing-room it was the same. I longed to tell Mr. Crayford to speak to her, to express his regret. Hers was a generous nature, though now pride and indignation and a keen sense of injury made her so silent and frigid. At last he could bear it no longer. She had

taken her usual seat, and involuntarily made room for Coonach. Then the recollection came over her, and she dashed the tears away, bending over her work to hide them.

He went up to her. "Helen," he said, "I would give my right hand to bring him back."

She did not speak.

"Forgive me, Helen," he continued; "I cannot forgive myself."

"It was the only thing I had to love," she sobbed.

"True, Helen," he said, gently; "but not the only thing that loves you."

I was so glad: she raised her face and let him kiss her cheek.

May 15.—Sir William's mind has failed rapidly the last few months, since his son's death, and Helen has been constantly with us at Cherry Court, relieving her mother, who feels the loss of his mental powers far more than she did his bad health: and so this afternoon she was sitting quietly helping him in his game of patience (how much need she had of it herself,) when a visitor was announced, a gentleman who did not give his name—should he be admitted?

She did not know Captain Langton had landed from the East Indies. He had heard of his mother's death before he left, but not that his father and sisters had gone to Italy. He had taken the night mail which stops at Wernbury, and on his way to Langton drove round by Cherry Court. She did not know this. She stood face to face with him, her lips apart, as if to speak, and so I found them when Sir William told me to open the door and I followed her out.

"Helen!" he said, both his hands outstretched to take hers.

Her father's voice: "Helen, Helen! where are you? What are you doing? You take no notice of me. Why am I left with the door open in this way?"

She instantly passed into the room, and, bending over him, "Father," she said, "you remember Captain Langton?"

"Langton, Langton," repeated Sir William; "he was member for the county many years ago."

"Yes, dear papa, his father was: this is his son, Guy Langton;" and her voice trembled.

"Ah! I forget strangely. You are welcome, Captain Langton;" and he extended his hand with something of his old pleasant manner. "Lady Dacre would be happy to see you, I have no doubt, but she is ill—confined to her room."

"Not ill, dear father, only gone for a walk."

"She is ill," repeated the invalid, vehemently. "I have not seen her for some days. Everything I say is contradicted. I must know best, and yet everyone contradicts me. My son, my poor boy is dead, sir, you won't contradict *that*, I suppose?" he said, peevishly. "My daughter has left me—and my only son dead—my grey hairs with sorrow

to the grave, I've read somewhere. My son was killed, and my daughter, I was saying, Langton, my daughter has left me—married, sir, married—but has worn this dress ever since—strange dress for a bride, eh, Mrs. Crayford?"

"Father!"

"Well, well, don't be vexed, poor child; don't be vexed. Yes, yes, I know; poor Edward, poor Edward! I wish you would put some of that crape on my hat, though." Then he turned to his game, and seemed to forget there was anyone present.

Helen rose, and moved a little distance from Sir William. "Are you going to Langton?" she said.

"Yes; I am on my way there; but the man who is driving me tells me the house is empty. I shall see the old place, and then join my father and sisters." He spoke carelessly. Then, in a lower voice: "Is all your poor father said true?"

"He is rather worse to-day," Helen said. She was leaning against the bookcase, her face turned away from him.

"But is it *true*?" and he took her hand in his own. It was her left hand. She wore no rings but *the* one which separated them. He let it drop, said nothing, and turned to leave the room.

"One moment," she said; "I *must* speak. It was not my fault."

"Fault!" he repeated, bitterly. "Oh no! you were a child, and the absent are easily forgotten. I only wish that fellow had been a little more communicative, and I should not have made a fool of myself by coming round here. I hope Coonach is dead; is he?"

"Yes," said Helen, her eyes filling with tears, as she looked out of the window towards the old cherry-tree, "he's buried there," and there was a far-away look in her eyes on the white blossoms. They were falling now just as they had fallen two years ago; but how different they seemed!

"Faithful old fellow!" with strong emphasis on the "faithful." "I'm glad of it. I wish *I* were."

"Oh, Guy," she said, still watching the white blossoms—I don't think she could meet his eyes—"forget me."

He laughed. I longed to send him away.

"I'll try," he said, scornfully, "but it is not so easy for every one. Make my excuses to Lady Dacre. Good morning."

He took up his hat and turned to leave the room. One moment she clung to his arm. "Guy, only say you forgive me," she said, imploringly.

"Why did you marry that man? Tell me that."

"I must not tell you, Guy, I cannot."

"I beg your pardon," he said, and with such bitterness—"a question I had no right to ask."

"Guy, we shall never meet again. Have mercy; say you forgive me." But he was gone. She heard him drive from the door, and then she fainted. Oh, my poor Helen!

Little worthy of record occurred for some years after this. Sir William died in December, 1838 ; and Lady Dacre a few months after.

August 21, 1843.—Colonel Langton is coming to-day ! They have never met since that sad day, and now he is coming. Mr. Crayford is away, and Helen is to see him and hear particulars of young Harry Foster, who had exchanged into his regiment. Poor boy, he was terribly wounded in his first engagement, and died in Colonel Langton's tent.

Helen was really fond of Harry. He spent a year's leave here, and she grieved as much as Mr. Crayford over his early death.

And now Helen must see him, speak to him, listen to his voice once more ! See him, Guy Langton, calmly, as if those early dreams had never been. "Stay with me," she said, and so we sat awaiting him.

There was the sound of wheels coming up the avenue, then the door-bell rang, and Colonel Langton was announced. I had seated myself at the end of the room, and had my writing things before me. Helen crossed the room, gave him her hand, pointed with an indistinct murmur to the sofa, before she raised her eyes to look at him. When she did, the pale face grew even paler. Claspings her hands tightly together on her knee, she sat leaning forward, reading the tale written on his face. The strong hand which none may resist was laid upon him. His fight was nearly done.

At last he spoke. "I have brought poor Harry Foster's watch," he said, "his pocket-book, and a lock of hair he wished given to his uncle ; and his prayer-book, given by you, he begged might be given you again, with his love. He was a fine young fellow, and would have been a good soldier."

He placed them on the table by her. "Poor boy," she said ; "you brought him from the battle ?"

"Yes."

"And were wounded yourself doing it ?"

"Yes."

There was a pause. "I have more to tell you about poor Foster ; he was a good deal with me. You know he exchanged into my regiment from some boyish fancy he took to me ?"

She bowed her head : she knew well enough how often the boy had spoken of Colonel Langton in boyish admiration, as boys do speak, before head conquers heart.

"He often spoke of you and of his uncle," he continued, with effort, "and one day he told me the reason of your marriage." He rose, walked to the window, came back, and stood beside her. "Helen, the last time we met I was half mad with anger and disappointment. You will believe how often and how bitterly I have regretted the words I spoke then. You asked for forgiveness—and I——"

"I am forgiven now," she murmured.

"I came to-day to ask yours, Helen. I have longed to live to do this."

She took his one hand in her own two trembling ones and kissed it, sobbing.

"Bless you, Helen," he cried, sadly. "I had so much to say, and it seems so hard, now I see you. One day Harry said, 'I *am* sorry for Aunt Helen, Colonel. You don't know how unhappy she is: she never laughs. My uncle would do anything in the world for her, but she hates him.' Forgive me, Helen, but I said, 'Hardly that, why did she marry him?' 'Oh, don't you know, Colonel, why she married?' and then the boy told me. I suppose I betrayed myself, or perhaps he knew of our early engagement, for after the fight, when I carried him into my tent, and did all I could for him before the doctor came, he said, 'Colonel, I want to ask you one question?' I was bending over him, for his voice was almost a whisper, 'Ask it, my boy,' I replied.

"He looked up at me. 'Aunt Helen?' was all he said, but his eyes asked the question, and I answered it. Then he became very faint, but afterwards, when he had recovered a little, he added, 'Colonel, the Great Captain has come and called for me; I shall never see England again. My uncle was very good to me always—all my life. I wish—Colonel, don't be angry with me—I wish Aunt Helen would try and love him ever so little. She would be happier herself, and I should be glad of that, for she was very kind to me, very. Will you ask her?'

"The surgeon came in then; he examined his wounds, shook his head, gave him something to ease the pain, and said to me, as he left, 'He'll not get through the night, poor lad.' 'I was able to return to him an hour before he died. He was quite sensible—told me about his watch, and the prayer-book you had given him, and repeated the words you had written under his name: 'Continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto your life's end.'

"'You'll give it her, Colonel?' he murmured. 'Give it her, and ask her to try.' 'God is Love,' were his last words.

"Helen, this was a strange message—a strange task to set me! In health and strength beyond me quite. But since the Great Captain, as the poor boy said, has sent His summons for me also, my eyes see clearer, and I thought, if my last words could bring peace to you, I should——"

"Oh, Guy—Guy—Guy!" she sobbed, covering her face with her hands.

"So now, Helen, farewell." He put his hand on her head, "God bless you," and that was their last parting. When she looked up he was gone.

I think I cried as much as poor Helen.

AT GASTEIN.

THE Gastein season is supposed to be in the full tide of its prosperity in the months of July and August. Early in June people begin to arrive, each day adding to the number ; but not for a month later do they overflow. In May, comparatively speaking, the place is deserted. And yet for pleasantness, for beauty of nature, for health, the months of May and September are infinitely to be chosen before those that intervene.

Gastein, little known to the English, is frequented principally by Prussians, Russians, and Hungarians : less generally by the Austrians, though actually in the dominions of his Catholic Majesty. The polished, pleasure-seeking Austrians possess other places of resort, gayer, brisker, and less difficult of access. Pre-eminent amongst these stands Ischl, in the Salzkammergut, one of the most delightful and romantic spots on the face of the whole earth.

It was now the month of May, when, as has just been said, Gastein is, comparatively speaking, deserted. Thus, in my walk from Straubinger's to the doctor's consulting-room, I found little to distract the attention beyond a terror-stricken cat flying on the wings of fear from some unseen danger ; and the keepers of the stalls in front of the hotel, who, basking in the sunshine, were lazily awaiting the hour for their midday meal. I rang boldly at the open door, and as the peal echoed through the small stone building, I felt that the leap in the dark, the first step, had been taken. Now for good news, or evil.

To the presence of the doctor—a little man, full of life, energy, and intelligence—was an interval of a few moments. With many apologies for the unfinished state of his consulting-room—he had but just returned from his winter practice at Nice—he handed his visitor a chair, and sat himself down opposite. A German, he spoke also English and French ; and though he often made ludicrous mistakes, none laughed more heartily than he, when they were made clear to him. We continued for the most part to hold intercourse in one or other of the two languages, as long as I remained in Gastein.

“ My dear sir, you come for the baths. ”

I stared. Not by any means had I come with such intentions ; but it was vain to endeavour to explain this to the doctor. To visit Gastein and not take the baths was a wild idea his brain refused to admit or comprehend.

“ When did you arrive ? ”

“ On Saturday. ”

“ Saturday. To-day is Monday. And you have not yet taken a

bath. My dear sir, allow me to congratulate you in the highest manner upon your wisdom and patience. Most men are in such a very great hurry that they jump into the bath immediately they arrive." Full stop, and a change of tone. "You should not do this," he continued emphatically. "You should wait one day to rest, one day to become accustomed to the air; and the third day take the bath."

"But," I cried, "I am disappointed in the air. It had been reported as wonderful; pure and bracing. To all this it appears the exact opposite; hot and unrefreshing."



GASTEIN: VIEW OF STRAUBINGER'S AND WATERFALL.

"This air of to-day is not the true Gastein climate," returned the doctor. "Never have I known it so hot as this. The reason is that for long we have had no rain. The amount of evaporation here is so great that without rain we cannot live. The air becomes dry; the ground parched; nature languishes. When the rain comes then you will see and feel and breathe the true, health-giving air of Gastein."

He spoke in tones of such exultation, such convincing firmness raising his voice a little with each sentence; that it was impossible not to feel somewhat reassured.

"If that be the case," I said, fervently, "I hope it may come soon."

"Patience. It is coming. I feel it. In a few days all will be changed. Meanwhile, you take a bath to-morrow."

"I did not come for the baths," I cried, with a last desperate effort to make him understand. "I was ordered to take the air. Concerning baths never a word was spoken."

"Not take the baths!" ejaculated the doctor, with raised hands, a look of positive terror creeping into his face. "Come to Gastein and not take the baths! Then why come at all? You can find air in other parts of the world. Better air than this; but the baths of Gastein are to be found in Gastein alone. Nowhere else are there such waters. If you are overworked and require rest, they will cure you. The air is all very well as far as it goes; but it is the baths you must look to."

Making due deductions for prejudice or partiality, there yet seemed sense and logic in these words. Certainly it was impossible to discover at present any great virtue in the air. Therefore, plunging boldly into the unknown future, I resolved on the spot to give the baths a chance of working the good prophesied.

"I suppose they will not do harm?" I cautiously remarked.

The doctor shook his head. "I am certain of that, by merely looking at you. Leave yourself without fear in my hands."

He was kind and attentive, willing and wishing to be of use in all manner of ways, apart from his professional capacity. Through the whole of a four weeks' sojourn he was always the same. Happiest it seemed when most actively employed in the welfare of others.

Before leaving the Dampfbad, I spoke of the unpleasantness of the waterfall.

"You are at Straubinger's," said the doctor. "What is the number of your room?"

"Seven."

"So! On the ground floor—the panelled chambers. I know them well. Count Bismarck had them two seasons running. I was his medical adviser."

This mark of distinction was by no means sufficient to atone for the discomforts of No. 7, with which sentiment the doctor seemed to acquiesce.

"The noise of the waterfall is certainly disagreeable," he added; "especially to those unaccustomed to it. Some cannot endure it: they have no rest by day, no sleep by night. These are my highly nervous and excitable patients. Others, on the contrary, it soothes: their slumbers in consequence are deep and long. One patient of mine, a general in the Prussian army, who had overworked his brain with military tactics, fancied he heard a tune in the waterfall. Whatever melody entered his head on first awaking was taken up by the torrent and carried on

throughout the day. It would drive him mad, he said : and I believe it would, had he remained. He was obliged to take rooms in Hof-Gastein."

"Did he recover in the end?"

"I don't know. He went away at the appointed time, and I never heard of him again."

"With me it is not so bad as that," I said. "But it gives me a feeling of unrest : as if I should like to get away from it and could not."

"In short," returned the doctor, "it is a perpetual nightmare to you; and no wonder. You want rest and quiet, and that you must have. You must change your hotel. This afternoon I will accompany you to the Hirsch : they may have rooms to suit you, and there the fall is almost inaudible. I have also rooms in my villa ; you can see it from here. Accommodation is so scarce in the village that during the season every unoccupied room in every house is, and ought to be, given up to visitors."

He crossed to the window and pointed to a pretty house on the mountain side. It was more elevated than any other house in Gastein, in situation charming.

"I will show you over it this afternoon," said the doctor. "But," he modestly added, "I do not think you would be sufficiently comfortable there. Look here," he continued, drawing a thermometer from a round, wooden case ; "this will send to your room, and to-morrow morning you must put it into your hand on first awakening. It will give me the temperature of your body, and thus enable me to regulate the heat of your bath. To-morrow at ten o'clock I will come to you, and be present when you enter the bath : on no account must you enter it alone."

After a few more remarks we separated ; the doctor reiterating his promise to call in the afternoon.

It was far too hot to walk about ; therefore I returned to the hotel, and threw myself on the sofa, weary and desponding, yet in more hopeful spirits than I had left it in the morning. In a very short time I fell asleep in spite of the rushing water, and dreamed that I was on board a steamer starting from the tropics to the North Pole in search of the North Wind. From this delightful sensation, I was speedily awakened by the ringing of the table-d'hôte bell : a summons by no means to be disregarded.

There was a very small attendance ; twenty in all, perhaps. The dinner, to speak temperately, was bad, and I flattered myself that as the number of guests increased, so in proportion it would improve. A hope destined to prove a delusion.

First, of course, came soup, thin and poor, which reminded me forcibly of the schoolboy's recipe—a quart of water boiled down to a pint and served up : then boiled beef, having the appearance of bouilli, without any of the merit of that old-fashioned dish. Next came

sausages smothered in a species of sauer-kraut (I live its agonies over again in writing), of which the terrible smell had penetrated to us long before the entrance of the unsavoury mess. In an evil moment, influenced by the pangs of hunger, I took half a sausage upon my plate, and carefully divesting it of every trace of the offending vegetable, I, with trembling heart, cut off a small slice. The consequences were not fatal or even very serious : I did not quite choke : I did not follow the example of the robust German lady, my vis-à-vis, who was not sufficiently well bred to make even an attempt at swallowing the dainty morsel she had taken : but I never repeated the experiment.

Next came some veal, hard, dry, tough, and tasteless—I might multiply adjectives *ad infinitum*—accompanied by salad. This was followed by a large baked pudding that had swelled out over the dish to proportions alluring to a hungry stomach ; but when the spoon was applied, it was found to possess no inside, and literally collapsed.

This was all. And we were kept so long waiting between each course—an expression too dignified to be applicable—that about an hour and a half had been devoted to the ceremony. It was not the quantity that was so much to be objected to—though that was meagre enough—as the quality, and the bad cooking ; and, as the days went on, the want of variety. Many a time I rose from table as hungry as I had sat down.

After dinner, at the appointed hour, in the midst of the broiling heat, the doctor arrived, carrying a yellow alpaca umbrella and a thin overcoat, without which two appendages he was never to be seen : the one as a protection from the sun, the other in case of rain.

“ You may laugh,” he cried, as I looked at the coat and wondered why he had brought it out on so hot a day. “ You have an old saying ‘ Who laughs last laughs best.’ I should never have attained to this age without ailments, had I not been careful of my body. It is an excellent servant, but a poor master. I never by any chance go without my coat and umbrella.”

It was quite true : he never did.

“ I suppose you have come to fulfil your promise,” I remarked. “ To help me to find out a lodging where I shall not be altogether sent mad by this uproarious waterfall ? ”

“ Certainly,” he replied. “ Unless you are becoming familiar enough with the noise not to heed it.”

“ Not in a hundred years,” I returned, “ though it would kill me in a hundredth part of that time. Like the general, I shall soon hear tunes in the air.”

“ Allons, then ! ” he cried, laughing, and jumping up. “ To the Hirsch ! ”

“ I want you to give me some account of Gastein,” I said, as we left the hotel. “ You must know its history from beginning to end—I know neither end nor beginning.”

"The very thing I was proposing to myself," replied the doctor. "Gastein deserves to be better known than it is. I have written a book about it in my own tongue, and small brochures have been translated into French and English; but few, I imagine, have penetrated into your country."

Here the doctor cleared his throat ominously, furled and unfurled again his yellow umbrella, and resumed the thread of his discourse.

"Gastein," he said, "as I need not remind you, is on the borders of Carinthia, 3,135 feet above the level of the Mediterranean. For the last sixteen years I have taken meteorological observations upon the country, and from the frequent rains, and occasional snows that fall upon the mountains in mid-season, I believe that as a summer resort it is the coolest place in Europe. From the nature of the soil it is clear that the two valleys of Bockstein and Hof-Gastein were vast lakes, drained by great convulsions of the earth. Probably the same convulsions, which rent the rocks and admitted a passage for these waterfalls, cast up at the same time these hot, health-giving springs."

"That must have taken place centuries ago?"

"Yes. The history of the Valley of Gastein is properly divided into five periods. The first commences with the discovery of the hot springs in the year 680, and terminates with the first improvement and elevation of the place in 1436."

"A gap of nearly 800 years!"

"Good things are of slow growth," observed the doctor, sententiously; "but in the end they are sure. Gastein is even yet in its infancy. I prophesy for it a great career in the future."

"What caused Gastein suddenly to awake out of its long slumber in the year 1436?"

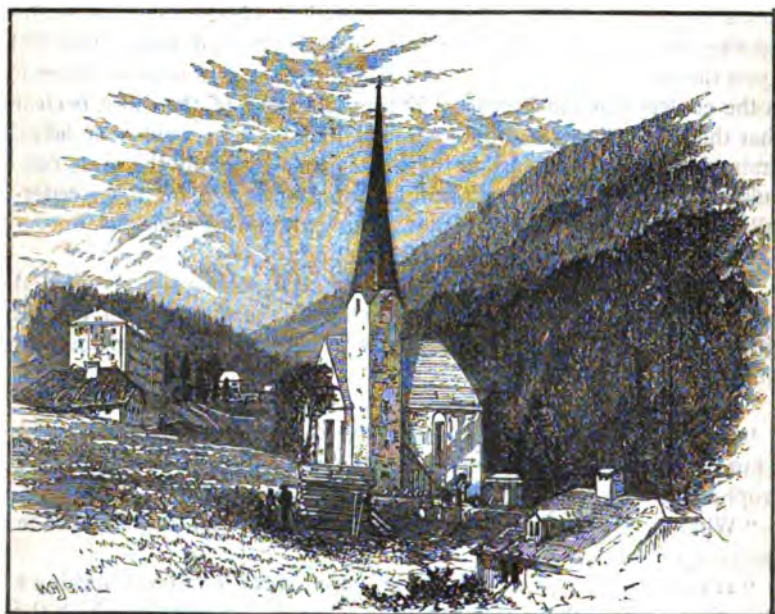
"It happened," replied the doctor, "that three hunters, following a stag, found him bathing his wounds in some hot springs, to which the vapours attracted their attention."

"But that legend," said I, with a laugh, "is connected with so many of your German baths. A stag seems generally to have been the cause of discovery."

"In this instance," returned the doctor, "I think it is a true tale. At any rate we will believe so, and be grateful to the stag. Instinct, you see, is made useful to man as well as beast. But here we are at the Hirsch, and I must delay my account until our visit of inspection is over."

The people of the Hirsch were very civil and obliging. The rooms were airy and comfortable, and the sound of the waterfall could scarcely be heard. From the front windows, low down, stretched the long, smooth plain, with here and there small wooden houses dotted about like nests in the grass. The many shades of green caught the eye, and the small stream winding capriciously through all, looked like a thread

of liquid silver in a carpet of mossy velvet. On either side towered the mountains, the huge Gamskarkogel, from whose heights a hundred glaciers may be seen, rising above his fellows. Far away, cutting the mountain-side, tapered the spire of the church of Hof-Gastein, looking, in comparison, about the size of a toy from a child's Noah's Ark. Had I not made up my mind that the doctor's rooms would suit me better than any others, I should have taken these on the spot. As it was, I said that before deciding I should like him to show me over his own house.



VIEW OF ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH AND HIRSCH INN.

"With pleasure," he answered, "but not to-day. I do not want you to get in the least degree tired. To-morrow afternoon I will take you up. Let us now, as we retrace our way, continue our account of Gastein. Where were we?"

"At the first period and the wounded stag."

"True. Well, later on, the Romans seeking for gold and silver, found here, under the first Bishop Rupert, two pious Christian men, whom they carried away to Rome to be devoured by lions in the amphitheatre. These martyrs are now celebrated as patrons of the Church."

"By way of reward?"

"By way of commemoration," rebuked the doctor; "and as an example for us to follow in the steps of good men."

"At the risk of being devoured by lions?"

"Those days are gone by. The working of the gold mines was

continued under the control of the bishops of Salzburg. Time went on, and when there were as yet but five or six rude cottages in Gastein, the Emperor Frederic, grandfather of Maximilian the First, came here for the baths. The second period begins with the first civilization of Gastein in 1436, and extends to the first scientific examination of the hot springs in 1562, by the celebrated Theophrastus Paracelsus. The third period dates from 1562 to the first scientific analysis by the new method of chemistry, in 1780, by Barisani.

"About this time many events took place. Earthquakes, inundations, and fires; which completely destroyed Hof-Gastein, then the capital, if we may so call it, of the valley. Then followed religious wars, and the expulsion of the Protestant miners—a signal for the decay of mines, and the cause of the development of the thermal station.

"The fourth period extends from 1780 to 1830. The fifth from 1830 to the present time. In this last period, Gastein has made most progress, especially in the few past years. We have established a hospital; built a stone bridge over the waterfall—no slight achievement for Gastein; fifteen new houses have lately been erected, together with the long glass gallery that in some places would be dignified to the rank of an *établissement*: we have established a post and telegraph office: the principal spring has been discovered, and its properties carefully analysed.

"This, my dear sir, is all I can tell you, in words, of Gastein. You will find it more elaborately narrated in my book; and in a somewhat less condensed form in the brochures. But I think the above facts contain the pith of the matter; sufficient to satisfy your curiosity or search for knowledge."

"What, then," I inquired, "are the chief maladies for which these waters are useful?"

"Chiefly for all complaints affecting the nervous system. I need not tell you that this is saying a great deal. One of their chief virtues is in restoring those suffering from overwork of the brain. But they are good for overwork of every kind—that of body as well as brain. In cases of weakness, also, arising from wounds or other causes. Cut your finger and plunge it into ordinary hot water: the blood flows more freely: plunge it into this mineral water, and immediately the flow ceases. This is one undoubted proof of its possessing distinctive and peculiar properties. It is excellent in cases of paralysis and gout; often restoring the former when all other remedies and experiments have failed. I could tell you of many remarkable cases, of long standing, that have come under my immediate notice. It is excellent in cases of rheumatism. One reason to be assigned for this is the wonderful amount of electricity contained in the water; thus enabling the power to be administered to the body as in no other form. But," exclaimed the doctor, brandishing his yellow weapon, which at this

moment served as a walking-stick, "I must be off. Though Gastein is so empty, I have already a few patients on my list. So good-bye. To-morrow, at ten o'clock, I will come to you."

With a handshake, without which token of friendliness he never met you, though it were a hundred times a day, the doctor abruptly took leave.

Precisely at ten o'clock the following morning he made his appearance, brimful, as usual, of life and energy. We proceeded together to the bath-room, which looked comfortable, but felt warm.

"Ah!" he cried. "That bad-meister, who is so fat himself that he needs an unlimited amount of heat to bring him down, thinks every one in like condition with himself. He has a mania for over-heating the rooms. I have warned him of this over and over again, but it is of no use. He is a salamander, who, when we are melting, feels himself in his element."

In a few moments I had divested myself of every vestige of a refined and civilized age. The doctor proceeded then to knock and thump me about, sounded my liver, listened to the beating of my heart, looked to see if my shoulders were straight, and finally bade me enter the water.

"Is every one subjected to these examinations?" I asked, as my feet touched the stone bottom.

"Without exception," was the emphatic reply. "I allow no one to enter the baths without it."

"Not even the ladies?"

The doctor was a bachelor and modest, and the question sent a warm tinge into his face.

"My dear sir," he returned, inexpressibly shocked, "how can you entertain such an idea? With the ladies we take everything for granted. How do you find the water?"

"It seems comfortable; neither warm nor cold."

"That is just right. As far as possible you should feel as if you were in nothing at all."

"I should have thought the hotter the water the more efficacious the bath."

"Ah!" he cried. "Like many other men who are apt to form opinions. A little does good, a great deal must do more, you argue. It is the reverse. If you took the bath too hot, it would——"

"What?"

"I hardly know what," he laughed. "It might do you much harm, but it would not certainly bring the desired relief. Do you ever take a warm bath in England?"

"Not being quite uncivilized—yes."

"Then I invite you to compare your sensations after those baths and these, and to give me a description of them. And now I will leave you. Twenty minutes are nearly up; the wrinkles are coming

to your finger-ends, and when they are well developed you must come out. Then lie down for an hour, a sheet your sole covering. The latter I call an air bath, and it is essential it should be taken. Now farewell. This afternoon I will call for you."

He left the room, and shortly after I entered the adjoining compartment, and lay down for an hour upon a small sofa bed. A calm, soothing sense of stillness crept over mind and body; a sense of rest and repose unspeakably delicious. Upon going into the open air when the time was up, in place of the lassitude so often felt after a warm bath in England, the sensations were of a precisely opposite character. The air, if warm, seemed light: the feet scarcely appeared to touch the ground, so buoyant was the body. All nature looked brighter, the trees fresher: even the waterfall for the moment was less unbearable. I felt in condition for an expedition to the top of the highest mountain.

The dinner hour came and passed with much the same result as on the previous day. No new faces at the table; no fresh artistic efforts on the part of the cook; the same unsatisfactory dishes: the same amount of time spent in not eating. Yet every one appeared happy and blessed with a good appetite. The curious thing about the guests was that for the most part they appeared the very picture of health and strength; it was scarcely possible to imagine them here for the purposes of renovation. Appetite, bright eyes, lively conversation; all this abounded. And to a silent observer, an opportunity of studying the habits and manners of the people.

Determined to take it idly—what other resource was there under the circumstances—I lay down after dinner, until the doctor entered and roused me.

"What?" he cried. "Napping? Sleeping after dinner?"

"No, no," I returned. "But what would you? Repose after that heavy meal is necessary. The table-d'hôte, my dear doctor, like many other things in life, wants a good deal of reforming."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. "I hear complaints on all sides," he answered, "but what can I do? You must put up with it for the sake of health. I am glad you were not sleeping. Nothing is worse after dinner: it relaxes the body and stupefies the mind. But if, at times, you really cannot keep awake, then drop off for a quarter of an hour; not longer. If you cannot wake yourself, desire some one to do it for you."

"It is by no means one of my habits," I said. "But here, and in this state of the atmosphere, what is to be done?"

"Go into the wandelbahn and play the piano: or climb up a little way into the mountain and sit down in one of the arbours; or buy a horn and blow it: anything, in short, rather than disobedience to orders. And now I will pilot you to my humble abode. It was the best I could get in Gastein. Some day, perhaps, I may build myself another."

We went forth and took our way through the wandelbahn: a room about four hundred feet long, built chiefly of glass, low and narrow. It was used by the visitors generally in wet weather, upon which occasion the band took shelter there, and frantically performed Strauss's waltzes and other popular tunes for an hour at a stretch. Invalids were wheeled about in bath-chairs, and people who were not invalids paraded up and down, backwards and forwards, laughing, gesticulating, talking in tones not particularly subdued, after their manner. The place contained a circulating library, separate reading rooms for ladies and gentlemen, and a refreshment room. It overlooked the wildest part of Gastein on the one side, the road on the other; therefore, everything that transpired might be seen from its windows.

Through this we quietly strolled, glad of a moment's shelter from the burning rays of the sun, which appeared but to laugh to scorn the powers of an umbrella. We soon found ourselves again beneath the bare sky, and the doctor's yellow alpaca was immediately hoisted, whilst his inevitable coat, thrown over his arm, trailed gracefully behind him. A few minutes' walk, a steep ascent, and we stood on the doctor's territory. Here he was lord and master: provided his eyes took not too wide a range, monarch of all he surveyed. House, ground, all belonged to him.

As we neared the villa a somewhat laughable incident occurred: for to such dignity in this quiet spot was the most trifling event elevated. The doctor was a man at all times ready to do a good turn, and would put himself to trouble in order to be useful. A philanthropist, but at the same time a strict lover of justice, whether in upholding his own rights and privileges or those of others. On this especial afternoon, as we approached the villa, we perceived an army of goats feeding upon his banks and devouring his grass, attended by a sleepy herd. Down went the umbrella; up it shot again as a menacing weapon. "Ah! ah!" shrieked he, rushing full tilt at the despoilers, something after the manner of Don Quixote charging the windmills: "Ah! ah!" he reiterated, brandishing frantically his deadly instrument, "das ist nichts! das ist mein grund!" With so much effect was his power exerted, that the goats one and all scampered off, as if another horned personage had been at their heels; and the sleepy goatherd had no resource but to follow with alacrity. Then the doctor turned to me, a laugh taking the place of his avenging expression.

"I am compelled to be severe with them," he said, "or this would be a daily occurrence. And what would my own poor goats do without their grass?"

The doctor's house was very pleasantly situated, and took in all Gastein from its best point of view. Two or three arbours were scattered about the garden, where it was possible to sit out all day long in the fresh air. He pointed out with some pride various small scientific

matters, which his own ingenuity had constructed. I soon made up my mind that only here would I stay as long as we remained in Gastein. Everything was so home-like, so clean to a fault, so comfortable and cheerful, that all I had yet seen passed out of mind.

From the windows the look-out was wild and grand. In the hollow was Gastein ; we looked down upon Straubinger's as from a great height ; here it was possible to enjoy a view of the waterfall : not so far off that no sound could penetrate, we were just at that distance where it became soothing rather than otherwise, and at night would induce sleep. On all sides the mountains reared their heads, green or barren, or partially covered with fast-melting snows.

As days went on the move proved a wise one. No place could have been pleasanter. Everything the doctor possessed was placed at the disposal of his inmates. As for Marie, the housekeeper, she certainly must have owned the kindest heart in the world, and morning, noon, and night, for nearly a month, never relaxed her attentions. Not that she was in any way obtrusive ; for, like many of her class in the Tyrol, there was a delicacy of feeling about her, and, it may be added, a certain amount of refinement, which invariably prevented her from going too far in her endeavours. Many were the gossips with Marie. She was quick and intelligent ; had travelled about a good deal with the doctor, and had made use of her eyes and head.

It was a pleasure to bid farewell to Straubinger's, the Bismarck rooms, and the roaring waterfall. Straubinger himself I had never seen, though I one day fruitlessly endeavoured to gain audience with the renowned maitre. I subsequently learned that you might ask for him fifty times before he would come to you. In Gastein he is a great man ; magistrate, betimes mayor, butcher, and general adjudicator of all questions, public and domestic. Once upon a time a gentleman, thinking his bill at the hotel very much overcharged, requested to see a magistrate, and forthwith was ushered into the presence of Herr Straubinger himself. It will easily be imagined how he fared in the sequel.

The very day of removal from the hotel to the doctor's, down came the long-looked for rain. It lasted some hours, and what a change in the atmosphere and all vegetation when all was over ! Everything until then had appeared dried up and sunburnt. The trees were drooping, the flowers hung down, the forget-me-nots, which here grow in wild profusion, were at death's door. Now, in the course of a few hours, all had brightened, freshened into new life and vigour. The air was cool ; and as night drew on, it became colder than was agreeable.

"Now you have the true Gastein air," cried the doctor, coming up to pay his evening visit. "Am I not right in saying that in summer it is the coolest place in Europe?"

"It is almost too much the other way," I replied. "As cold as before it was hot. Are you subject to these extremes?"

"At night the true Gastein air is always cold—that is, cold for summer. And so much the better. The days will generally be hot enough. If you wish to walk you must rise early, and take care to be home before the sun has any power."

No long walks; no exertion of any sort or description: such were the doctor's orders. When I suggested to him one day that I should like to climb one of the mountains, he cut a caper in the room and asked if I wished to ruin my health and undo all the effect of the baths.

"I don't perceive much effect to ruin," I returned. "I feel weaker than when I came here. Although I enjoy the baths and their soothing influence, it is impossible to say that they have done me any good."

This was true. After the fashion of the little marchioness and her orange-peel, I had often tried hard to make believe that I was accomplishing wonders: but the effort, in itself painful, had invariably to yield to stern fact.

"I am glad to hear it," was the doctor's reply.

"You have misunderstood me——" I began.

"Not a bit," he interrupted. "You say you feel less strong than when you came here, and I reply I am glad of it. It is a good sign. Up to the ninth bath you will get worse; after that, gradually better. The real benefit derived from these baths does not as a rule show itself for three months after they have been discontinued."

"How is that?"

"I don't know. But it is almost invariably the case. The effect of the baths is never immediate; they act upon the system gradually. I need not tell you the result is likely to be more lasting."

If simplicity of living could do anything towards recovery, there was undoubtedly every cause for hope. Soon after six o'clock, Marie would make her first appearance with breakfast; a frugal store consisting of coffee, butter, and two small rolls about the size and shape of russet apples. This elaborate meal disposed of, an hour's walk ensued, which being down-hill all the way there and up-hill all the way back, was usually as much as I could accomplish.

The same walk taken morning after morning would have become monotonous enough, but that it was scarcely possible to grow weary of the scenery, which, at each fresh appearance, seemed to show itself in some new aspect. The variations of light and shade, the tints of sky and mountain, were countless and ever-changing. At times the latter would be buried in a mist, leaving the valleys alone visible: again, the mountains would be clear, and the valleys full of a white vapour that assumed the appearance of a sea, as now for a moment it stood still, and now rolled majestically along, with a swelling, surging movement. One of my favourite occupations was to sit and watch these mists as they gradually unrolled themselves; to note the strange shapes they

assumed, the weird-like aspect they at times threw over the landscape. Then, when the sun burst forth from behind the grey clouds, how quickly they would hurry away, as if afraid of being pursued and overcome by so powerful an enemy !

It was a rare thing in these walks to meet any one beyond the peasantry ; and they perhaps were the pleasantest people to encounter : as a race of peasants, the handsomest I had ever seen, and the most in-



GASTEIN PEASANT.

nately courteous ; the tall, strong, athletic forms of the men well set off by the picturesque costume of the country. The women in youth are many of them beautiful, but they quickly grow old and ugly. I have never seen faces so hard and wrinkled as those of the aged women, many of their forms bowed and bent and shrunken, almost, as it seemed, to a state of collapse. They are subject to two sad scourges : the loss of their teeth while young, and a malady called goitre-throats. The dress of the women was also very picturesque, and some of them wore showy jewellery round their necks that would have driven many a stern Calvinist to serious discourse upon the pomps and vanities of the world.

I often wondered whence they inherited their beauty ; for they are an exception to the generality of the peasants in mountainous countries. In Switzerland, for instance, they are, as a rule, remarkable for plainness, and are no less inferior in mind and manners. They are less simple and intelligent ; less courteous and hospitable ; more selfish, and eager to do things for the sake of gain. In the Salzkammergut, as far as appearance was concerned, it was much the same.

Nowhere as here have I ever seen so many wild flowers. They grew in abundance, and formed a distinctive feature in the landscape, an object of interest in the walk. So abundant, so varied in colour, that many a field has seemed clothed with a vast carpet of the most brilliant hues. Here and there upon the mountain sides, might be seen clusters of what is always given as the Alpine rose ; and of what I always imagined to be so until my ignorance was enlightened with a shock by the doctor.

We were one day strolling together in his garden, enjoying the freshness of nature after a shower. Suddenly he pounced upon a small tree bearing a solitary blossom somewhat resembling the wild rose of our English hedges, but fuller and more perfect.

"Ah !" he exclaimed. "~~I am~~ delighted."

"What's the matter ?" said I, thinking from his excited manner that he had found ~~treasure~~ or made some new geological discovery.

"I am delighted," he repeated. "Delighted that this tree should blossom before your departure. Here is the true Alpine rose. That other flower that they give you for the Alpine rose is ~~not~~ a rose at all, as you must know. It is a species of the rhododendron, but so common as to be universally known by the more romantic name. The veritable Alpine rose is far more rare. This is the true specimen. And this, as far as I know, is the only natural rose without a thorn."

"A rose without a thorn ! Then what," said I, "becomes of the proverb ?"

The doctor laughed. "When you hear it quoted, you may contradict it," he replied. "Send all disbelievers to me for proof. Examine this tree for yourself. Take this stem and look at it."

He plucked the flower with a branch. It was certainly without thorns.

"I hope," said I, "all proverbs, are not to terminate a long life after this fashion ?"

"There are a few, I believe, would not bear too close examination," answered the doctor. "But it is not our business to refute them."

"Do you know," said I, looking pathetically at the flower, "I am sorry to have been mistaken in the true Alpine rose. This one is not half so pretty as the other, which also possesses a character of its own, and, in look at any rate, is far more uncommon."

"Ah," said the doctor, putting a hand on my shoulder, "does not this

remind you of real life ? Do we not often mistake the false for the true ? are we not prone to imagine such and such a thing good and great ? its possession happiness unspeakable—so long as it is impossible to us ? And when a leaf is turned in the book of life, and the impossible is within our grasp, does it not change aspect as completely as turning changes a kaleidoscope ? ”

“ But—— ” returned I.

“ But me no buts,” he interrupted, laughing. “ I know what you would say : that you still regret the old rose. Well, what have I to do with that ? Truth is truth, and to it all else must yield.”



NEVER NOW.

“ THE roses always bloom before I come,
Or after I am gone : ”—

Laughing she spoke, as down the walk we passed
The standards one by one.

In answer to my words,—“ A fortnight since
These trees were gay with flow'r ;
The rosery yonder shone with red and gold
Like jewelled fairy bow'r.”

Too soon ! too late ! And is it even thus
That joys elude the grasp ?
The hand, so warm before we sought its touch,
Lies cold within our clasp :

The smile, so ready when we heeded not,
Has vanished now we turn :
The present has no gift we count a prize ;
No secret we will learn :

In spring we ask, impatient, for the fruit
Autumn will surely bring ;
With apples heaped about our feet, we sigh
For blossoms of the spring.

My lady's words are ringing in my ears
Like saddest notes of doom ;

“ Before I come, or after I am gone,
The roses always bloom.”

OVERHAULED BY A PIRATE.

A STORY OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC.

[The following story is literally true, and may possibly be recognized by some men still living.]

"FIFTY miles more to Rio," says my companion, as we recline on a spare sail in the fore-top of the Southampton packet, enjoying, in all its fulness, a pleasure which the men of the north can but faintly appreciate—the luxury of shade and inaction—and surveying, with that cool, nothing-to-speak-of air characteristic of the undemonstrative Anglo-Saxon, the vast smooth expanse of sunlit sea beneath our feet, and the huge dark-green pyramid of Cape Frio, topped by its trim little light-house, towering giant-like overhead.

My fellow-watcher is a fine specimen of the "been everywhere and seen everything" class; a kind of real life Tom Thurnall, with all the ready invention, picturesque cosmopolitanism, and cool self-reliance, of Mr. Kingsley's wonderful hero. He has been half-murdered in Australia, fever stricken at Madras, run out of water in the North Pacific; he has summered at Bahia and wintered in Van Dieman's Land, eaten rice at Shanghai and drunk rum in Jamaica; served a gun at the bombardment of Sweaborg, and lain off Cronstadt in the "Wellington;" and is now, *seulement pour s'amuser*, about to join me in a run through the interior of Brazil.

"Now I think of it," remark I, "you promised me a South American story, and I've never had it yet. Suppose you give it me to-day. With all your travels, you must know a good yarn or two."

"Ah, that's just the mistake people always make," answers my friend. "On that point, I can't do better than quote you the verdict of an old boatswain of mine: 'You see, sir, folks think as how we sailors ought to know all about the places we've been to—but, d'ye mind, most on us don't lean that way; we just drop into the fust grog-shop, and that's all we see till we're off again. You ax a sailor where's 'The Three Tuns' or 'The Jolly Mariner,' and he'll tell you fast enough; but try him upon the scenery, and the hanimals, and the lingo, and all that 'ere—and he's mum directly.'"

"Well," remark I, laughing, "in spite of Professor Boatswain's dictum, I still adhere to my creed that you possess a good story or two. Can't you recollect a yarn connected with Cape Frio yonder? It would come in very appropriately just now."

Over the ancient mariner's broad, jovial face, falls a sudden gloom, like the shadow of some great peril rising up again from the far past. Before he can utter a word, I divine that the coming story will be one of no ordinary interest.

"Well," he answers, at length, with a grim earnestness in his voice, "it happens that I *have* got a yarn about Cape Frio—and such a one as you don't often hear now-a-days. You young travellers of this generation only read about what I saw then ; but it was not a thing to be forgotten. Listen, and I'll tell you about it.

"On a fine morning in May, 1831, I was rounding that very head-land that you see yonder, in the brig Carron, bound from Glasgow to Rio de Janeiro ; and although we had had our share of rough weather on the way, I can't remember a voyage that I enjoyed more. You young fellows of this high-pressure age, who gallop through your lives as you would ride to hounds, and fly over a country or an event as you would take a big fence, can't think how much you lose. In my time, the passage of the Atlantic was a voyage ; now, it's a jump. *We* used to be months upon months at sea, in the glorious breezy weather, with blue water and blue sky all round us, and the fresh air stirring our blood like the breath of life, and all the troubles and botherations of our life on shore lying behind us like a dream ; while *you*—but I mustn't forget my story.

"It was about ten in the morning, and I was lying on a spare sail in the main-top (a favourite lounge of mine) just as I'm lying here now—reading and looking through my telescope turn about—when all at once the skipper shouted up to me 'Maister K—, weel ye jist tak' a look through the prospec' (telescope) at yon craft on the weather bow ?' I levelled my glass at her, and made her out to be a long, low-lying craft, seemingly standing away from us ; and so I reported to the captain. But in another ten minutes or so, his voice came up again (and this time with rather a different sound in it) 'Maister K—, I dinna like the look of yon craft ; wull ye jist tak' anither look at her ?'

"Why," said I, levelling my glass, "she's changed her course—she's coming right down upon us !"

"'Wad ye kindly bring down the prospec, sir ? I wad like to tak' a look mysel !"

"This time there was a tremor in his voice, which no one could mistake. I began to feel rather uncomfortable, and came down post-haste. The skipper took the glass ; and I, watching him as he looked through it, saw his great red face grow whiter and whiter, till it was livid as a corpse ; and he just got out four words in a kind of half-choked whisper : '*She's an armed vessel !*'

"I understood it all in a moment ; and so did everyone else that heard him. This was just at the close of the war between Brazil and Buenos-Ayres ; and the Eastern coast was swarming with ex-privateers, who had been thrown out of work by the peace, and didn't care whom they attacked, so long as there was anything to be got by it. For one moment we thought of showing fight ; but that idea wouldn't

hold water. Not a cutlass nor a pike was there on board, let alone firearms; and our crew were the most innocent set you can imagine—quiet, easy-going Westland Scotchmen, mostly married men, with broad, good-natured, simple faces, like the villagers in a pantomime. The very sight of them would have been enough to re-assure any pirate on earth, and the only thing left to be done was to try stratagem. So the captain gave orders to rig up as many dummies as possible, with spars and old jackets, to look as if we mustered pretty strong—and every one began to conceal their valuables—I put my gold watch (this very one) among the grounds of the coffee-pot, the surgeon slipped his case of instruments under a loose plank, and our skipper hid the chronometer. Meanwhile the pirate (for there could be no mistake about her now) was coming down upon us like a vulture; she ran across our bows (to do her justice she was beautifully handled), came about like a flash, and lay-to within easy hail, so that we could see every face on board of her. And a rare sight they were! There seemed to be no discipline among them—neither captain nor officers; all were dressed alike, in coarse guernsey frocks, taken, no doubt, from some ship which they had plundered. There were men of all nations. Sallow Spaniards and red-faced Englishmen; lean, olive-coloured Portuguese and brawny, yellow-haired Germans; gaunt, hatchet-faced Yankees, and vicious-looking Mulattoes; but upon each and all was that nameless stamp which marks the man whom some great crime has cut off from his fellows—the kind of look that I (and you too, I dare say) have seen many a time among the worst class of convicts.

“It is always difficult for a man to tell before-hand how he will feel when suddenly brought face to face with a deadly peril. I have seen a man whose life was hanging by a hair, watch curiously the movements of a spider on his window. I, myself, in the crisis of the deadliest scrape I ever was in, found leisure to note the peculiar shape of a cloud in the sky. I remember, as if it were yesterday, that my first feeling at sight of the pirates was one of *rage*—a kind of angry disgust at the idea of such mean-looking rascals daring to attack us at all. But I had little time to think of it, for just as they ran alongside of us, our skipper, to my astonishment, coolly hailed them. ‘Ship ahoy! What’s your name?’

“There was a pause before they answered—giving some Spanish name, which I forget. Our skipper left them no time to think about it, but went on: ‘What’s your cargo? (It’s guid to hae first word, Maister K—.)’

“‘Fish.’

“‘That’s a lee, and a big one, sir,’ said the captain to me in a whisper; ‘nae fishing vessel wad hae less than fowre boats, and yon craft has but two. Whaur do ye come frae?’ he added aloud.

“‘From the Falkland Isles.’

" 'How many days?'

" 'Nine.'

" 'That's another lee, Maister K——; nae vessel cud do't in less than sixteen. (Aloud.) Whaur are ye bound for?'

" 'Pernambuco.'

" Then came a pause. We were at the end of our questions, and now the pirates must have their turn. In that terrible interval, with the worst of all deaths staring us in the face, there came the strangest, weirdest mingling of broad fun with the black horror that encompassed us. Our good, simple-hearted crew had obeyed the captain's orders to 'rig up dummies,' by sticking up a lot of spars, close together as the rails of a palisade, with old hats and jackets flapping upon them like scarecrows; while on the roundhouse itself appeared an enormous Kilmarnock bonnet, as if some giant had suddenly risen up through the very roof. This last absurdity made the cup of the skipper's patience overflow altogether. 'Ye drucken rascals!' he growled under his breath, 'do ye think ony mon wud put his heid through a roon hoose? or that the blackguards can be frightit like craws in a field? It's enough to make them board us at once, for daurin' to mak' fules o' them!'

" 'Ship ahoy! what's your name?'

" The sharp stern call fell across his mutterings like the cut of a sword. The captain started and answered.

" 'The Carron, from Glasgow.'

" 'What's your cargo?'

" 'Coals. (There's nae guid tellin' them, Maister K——, that we hae Manchester guids aboard; they wud cut oor throatts for the half of them.)'

" 'Where are you bound for?'

" 'Rio de Janeiro.'

" There was another pause; and then came a searching question. 'Do you reckon by a chronometer, or by time?'

" 'By time.'

" Then ensued a deep silence; and in that dead hush of expectation I could almost hear the beating of my own heart. The captain's face looked pinched and drawn like a three days' corpse; and the surgeon, who was standing near me, bit his lip till the blood ran down. It was not the thought of being killed that troubled us; but to die butchered like sheep, without a chance of resistance, was more than we could bear. We could see that there was a hot discussion going on among the pirates, and that many of them were for boarding us at once. Hands were pointed at us again and again, and voices rose up high and fierce, in a jargon of all languages at once; till at last (we seemed to have lived a life time in those few minutes) we heard the order given to 'put about,' and the pirate began to draw off. Then we knew that

we were saved, and every man drew a long breath, as if he had risen from the grave.

"But as the pirate wore round (as though she had still one more dose in store for us), I saw something in the after part of her that made my blood run cold. She was just coming about, and her cabin hatchway was right opposite me, when suddenly there rose half way up it the face of a young girl—beautiful exceedingly, but with a horror of utter despair in every feature that made one's flesh creep to look at. The face of Medusa was not ghastlier or more horrible; and as for her eyes—I see them sometimes in my dreams, even now. When she saw me looking at her (the pirates were all forward, and could not see that she was there), she just clasped her hands, and looked up to the sky with a gaze like a lost soul taking its last glance of heaven; and then vanished as she had come."

The old man ceased to speak, and seemed brooding over the story which he had told.

"And did you ever hear of them again?" asked I at length.

"Yes, *once!*" he answered, with gloomy emphasis. "Ten years, after this affair, a pirate was caught and hanged in one of the ports of the Mediterranean. Just before his execution, he begged for a priest, saying that he could not die without confessing *one* great crime in which he had had a share; and his confession cleared up a mystery which had long been the talk of Rio. Just about the time I went out, there was a vessel called the 'Redpole' expected from Brazil with specie; she was spoken off the cape here, and never heard of more. Well, this fellow said that he and his gang were on the look-out for her about Cape Frio, and that just before falling in with her, they spoke a brig from Glasgow, which they would not stop to plunder, for fear of letting the 'Redpole' escape them. And they got her at last, sure enough. She was lying becalmed off Cape Frio in the glorious summer morning, and the passengers, having just finished breakfast, were all about the deck reading, talking, singing, making love, when the pirate came down upon them. 'We rifled the cargo,' said he, 'scuttled the ship, and made everybody walk the plank.' Bah! I don't care to talk of it any more! Let us go down and begin packing; we sha'n't be long of getting to Rio now."

TEN MINUTES IN A LIFE.

IN the year 1065 of the Hegira—corresponding to 1687 of the Christian era—on the second day of the feast of Beiram, a large group of Mussulmans were assembled in a circle before the Mosque of St. Sophia. Some were standing, and others sitting cross-legged on carpets spread upon the sand. By degrees the group increased as the Moslems issued from the mosque, and as passers-by, prompted by curiosity, remained to see what was going on.

In the midst of a crowd of smokers a young man of remarkably handsome features, though somewhat bronzed by an Asiatic sun, was seated before a small table, which was covered with swords and brass balls. He was dressed in a close jacket of green silk, admirably fitted to set off his light and graceful figure; a girdle of antelope skin, on which some mysterious characters were inscribed in silver, confined a pair of loose trousers which were drawn close at the ankle. This light and attractive dress was completed by a Phrygian cap, from the top of which hung a small musical bell. By this costume, at once graceful and fantastic, it was easy to recognize one of those jugglers whom the feast of Beiram drew every year to Stamboul, and to whom was usually given the name of Zingaro.

The juggler performed his exploits without appearing to notice the admiration he excited. He took a pigeon's egg from a small moss basket, and, placing it upright on the table, struck it with the edge of his sword without injuring the shell. An incredulous bystander took the egg to examine it, but the slight pressure of his fingers served to destroy the frail object that had resisted the blow of the scimeter.

This act of dexterity was followed by many others. The boldness of the young man terrified the usually impassive Turks: and, what was yet more surprising, he made them smile by the amusing stories he related. Persons of his profession were generally silent, and their only power of amusement lay in their fingers' ends; but this man possessed the varied qualities of an Indian juggler and an Arabian storyteller.

One of the most enthusiastic admirers of the performance was a man apparently about forty years old, whose carpet was placed in the first circle, and whose dress denoted him to be of superior rank. It was the Bostangi-Bassa, superintendent of the gardens and keeper of the privy purse to the Grand Signior. The tricks ended, the young man completed his story and gathered up his implements as if to depart.

"Stop," said the Bostangi-Bassa. "Since you are such a magician, will you tell me the Sultan's favourite flower?"

"The poppy of Aleppo: it is red," replied the juggler, without a moment's hesitation.

"At what time does the Sultan sleep?" resumed the Bostangi.

"Never!" said the juggler.

The Bassa started and looked anxiously around him, fearing lest other ears had heard this answer. Then, beckoning the juggler to approach, and lowering his voice, he asked, "Can you name the Sultan's favourite wife?"

"Assarach," replied the diviner.

The Bostangi put his fingers on his lips in silence, and, moving away, said, "Follow me!"

The young man took up his yataghan, and, leaving the remainder of his effects to be carried by a slave, followed his guide toward the great door of the palace.

The history of successive sultans often presents little beyond the melancholy spectacle of a throne at the mercy of a lawless soldiery. Mahmoud was not the first of his race who sought to free the seraglio from those formidable guardians. Solyman III. had also formed this perilous design, but he was put to death by the janizaries, led by Mustapha, his uncle, who came from the Morea for the ostensible purpose of defending the emperor, but in reality to seize upon his throne. The Sultan Mustapha, who had commenced his reign in such a tragic manner, experienced all the anxiety and uneasiness which must ever attend the acts of an usurper and tyrant. Sordid, suspicious and perfidious, he broke through every promise he had made to the janizaries, whose creature, nevertheless, he was. Instead of doubling their pay, he diminished it; instead of lessening the taxes, he doubled them. He lived buried in the depths of his palace, the care of which he had confided to the Greek soldiery, notwithstanding the murmurs of the legitimate guards. The mutes, dwarfs, and buffoons of the palace could alone obtain access to his presence.

At the time the juggler was amusing the subjects of his Highness, Mustapha was seated cross-legged on his divan, seeking to drive away his ennui by watching the columns of fragrant smoke as they slowly rose from the long tube of his nargileh. A slave stood beside him, holding a feathered fan of various colours. The buffoons of the palace had vainly tried to extort a smile from their master. The impossibility of the Grand Signior gave them to understand that their time was ill-chosen, and that mirth would be dangerous; they had, therefore, one after the other, quitted the apartment, waiting to re-enter at the good pleasure of the prince. The palace was silent.

Shortly the hangings opposite the divan were gently raised, and a man stood in respectful attitude before Mustapha.

"What wouldst thou?" asked the Sultan.

The Bostangi-Bassa—for it was he—replied briefly, according to the custom of the seraglio: "A juggler stands without: he might perchance amuse your Highness."

The Sultan made an impatient sign in the negative.

"This man," continued the Bassa, "knows strange things. He can read the future."

"Let him come in."

The Bostangi bowed profoundly and retired.

Black slaves, armed with drawn scimitars, surrounded the imperial sofa when the juggler was introduced. After a slight salutation, the young man leaned gracefully on his yataghan, awaiting the orders of the Sultan.

"Thy name?" demanded Mustapha.

"Mehallé."

"Thy country?"

"Jugglers have no country."

"Thy age?"

"I was five years old when you first girded on the sword of Ottoman."

"Whence comest thou?"

"From the Morea, signior," replied the juggler, pronouncing the words with emphasis.

The Sultan remained silent for a moment, but soon added, gaily, "Since you can read the future, I will put your knowledge to the proof. When people know the future they ought to know the past."

"You say right, signior. He who sees the evening star rise on the horizon has but to turn his head to view the last rays of the setting sun."

"Well, tell me how I made my ablutions yesterday."

"The first with Canary wine, the second with wine of Cyprus, and the third with that of Chios."

The Chief of the Believers smiled and stroked his beard: he was indeed in the habit of derogating in this respect, as in many others, from the prescription of the Koran.

"Knowest thou," replied the sovereign, whom the Zingaro's answer had put into a pleasant humour, "knowest thou that I could have thee beheaded?"

"Doubtless," said the juggler, undauntedly, "as you did the Spanish merchant who watered his wine before he sold it to you."

Mustapha applauded the knowledge of the magician. He hesitated, nevertheless, before he ventured to put the dreaded question that tyrants, who are ever superstitious, never fail to demand of those who can read the stars.

"How long have I to live?"

The Grand Signior assumed a persuasive tone, and even condescended

to flatter the organ of destiny, in hopes of obtaining a favourable answer.

"Thou art a wonderful youth," said he: "thou knowest things of which, besides thyself, the mutes only possess the secret. I should wish to keep thee in my palace; I will make thee richer than all the merchants of Galatea, if thou wilt tell me the year when I must die."

Mehallé approached the Sultan, and, taking his hand, appeared to study the lines of its palm with great attention. Having finished his examination, he went to the window and fixed his eyes for some moments upon the heavens.

"The fires of Beiram are lighting up the cupola of the grand mosque," said he, slowly: "night is at hand."

Mustapha anxiously awaited the answer of the astrologer. The latter continued in a mysterious manner: "The declining day still eclipses the light of the constellations. I will answer you, signior, when the evening star appears."

The Sultan made a movement of impatience; anger was depicted in his countenance, and the look which he darted on the mutes showed Mehallé that he had incurred his Highness's displeasure. Curiosity, however, doubtless prevailed over every other feeling of the prince's mind, for, turning to the young man, he said:

"I am little accustomed to wait: I will do so, however, if thou canst amuse me until the propitious hour arrives."

"Would your Highness like to see some feats of juggling?" asked Mehallé, drawing his sabre from its scabbard.

"No, no!" exclaimed the Sultan, making the circles of slaves close in about him. "Leave thy arms!"

"Would you prefer a story, signior!"

"Stories that lull an Arab to sleep under his tent? No, I must have something new. Of all known games there is but one I care for: I used to play it formerly, but now there is not a person in the palace who understands the chess-board."

The juggler smiled, and, taking an ebony box from a velvet bag, he presented it to the Sultan, whose wish he understood.

The stern countenance of the Sultan relaxed at the sight, and the board was placed on the bowed back of a slave. Before commencing the game the Sultan said, "We are about to play; so far, good; but shouldst thou lose, what should I gain?"

"Since your Highness does me the honour of playing against me, I will stake all that I possess—this scimeter and my liberty. But what if I win?" added the young man, folding his arms.

"Shouldst thou win, I would give thee a slave."

"For a free man? The stake is not equal."

"I would add to it my finest courser."

"I need him not; my feet are swifter than those of an Arab steed."

"What wouldst thou, then?"

"I have a fancy, sublime signior. Until this day I have been nothing but a wanderer, wearing the dress of a juggler. Were I to complain of this I should be ungrateful, for this simple garb has ever seen me free and happy. I, however, renounce it. I become your slave; my mirth shall be for you alone; I will sing for you Indian songs; and, above all, I will divine for none but you. In return I will ask but one thing; it is, if I win, to allow me to wear your royal mantle for ten minutes, to sit upon the divan surrounded by slaves, and to place upon my head that dreaded turban whose fame has reached to the ends of the earth."

The proposition of Mehallé was received with a burst of laughter from the Sultan. "Thou wouldst sit upon the seat of the Caliphs! Dost thou not fear the weight of this turban upon thy silly head? A fine figure thou wouldst make under the pelisse of Ottoman! I should like to see thee giving audience to the viziers and pashas!"

"It is in your Highness's power to afford yourself this pleasure."

"Well," exclaimed Mustapha, "I will agree to the stake. A juggler upon the throne! Such a sight the East never saw."

The game was short. Though he played with skill, the Sultan was checkmated. It was fairly done, and he pleasantly prepared to fulfil his engagement.

Mustapha loosened his girdle, took off his pelisse, and laid down his turban, while a slave assisted to invest Mehallé in the royal garments. These preparations completed, the Sultan, dressed only in loose silken trousers and a richly-embroidered vest, approached a clock, and, placing his finger on the dial-plate, "When the hand shall mark the hour of eight," said he, "I shall have paid my wager, and then I will appoint you my astrologer."

The juggler ascended the divan, and, having placed his scimeter at his side, he ordered the door to be thrown open that the waiting courtiers might be admitted. The apartment, which the dim light of evening rendered obscure, was immediately filled with muftis and ulemas, agas of janizaries and pashas, great officers of the Porte and foreign ambassadors. He next ordered a new relay of guards to relieve those on duty, and then the withdrawal of all the personal attendants. It was the work of a moment. As the fresh soldiers were marching in, a sign from Mehallé caused the flambeaux to be lighted, when, in the dazzling flood of illumination, he stood erect, received the homage of the assembly, and, fixing more firmly on his head the scarlet-feathered turban, the emblem of power, he cried, in a commanding tone, "Let the standard of the Prophet be raised on St. Sophia! The people will salute it from afar at the fires of Beiram!"

At these words an officer stepped forth to execute the orders, but

Mustapha, who had been sitting aside, at first amused and then alarmed, arose to prevent him.

"Haggi Mohammed!" thundered the *ad interim* Sultan, "obey!"

The aga bowed and retired. Mehallé added, "Let the imaums repair to the mosques and offer up petitions for the new sultan! Cadilisqueir, have the tomb of Mustapha opened in Scutari!" The Sultan tried to smile. "Keepers of the treasury," continued Mehallé, "distribute among the poor of Stamboul the hoardings of the late Sultan!"

"Enough, buffoon!" exclaimed Mustapha, in an agitated voice, on seeing how readily his servants obeyed these strange orders.

"I still command," replied Mehallé, with calm self-possession; "the clock has not yet struck the hour of eight. Art thou, then, so impatient to know the fate that awaits thee?" The courtiers were at a loss to understand the mysterious scene. They looked with terror on this bold young man, invested with the insignia of power, and the Bostangi was astonished at seeing his master tremble before a strolling juggler.

"Mustapha," continued the diviner, "I am about to tell thee the time of thy death, for the evening star has risen. Mufti, advance."

The president of the *oumela* came forward. The diviner proceeded: "You who read every day the book of our Prophet and explain it to the people, tell me how avarice and usury, drunkenness and murder, perfidy and cruelty, should be punished."

The mufti replied in a low, grave tone, "By the Koran any one of these crimes is deserving of death."

"Thou hearest, Mustapha? It is the Prophet who condemns thee." As he said this he beckoned to the mutes. Mustapha tried to rush to the divan, but was seized by the slaves, who had learned to recognize the symbol of power which Mehallé wore, and the cord was passed around his neck.

"Thy hour has come! I am the son of Solyman, who fell fifteen years ago in this very place, pierced with wounds from thy sword! Thou hast counted the heads of every member of my family. Thou hast confounded the son of thy master with the child of a slave. I am the evening star: I am the Sultan Amurath!"

As he thus spoke the young prince made a step forward. His lofty brow, his features, voice, manner and commanding dignity of person inspired a deep emotion in the assembly. After a moment the cry went up, "Long-live Amurath!" and at the same moment the body of Mustapha fell lifeless on the marble floor.

The clock had struck eight. Before the hour-hand had once again passed round the dial, largess had been profusely scattered among the populace of Stamboul, oaths of allegiance taken by officers of state, and the proclamation, "His Highness, our very magnificent lord and master, Sultan Abdul Aziz Amurath, has ascended the throne!" trumpeted by the public crier before the mosque of St. Sophia.



M. RILEY EDWARDS.

EDMUND EVANS.

THE LAST PARTING.

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THE ARGOSY.

APRIL 1, 1873.

THE MASTER OF GREYLANDS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER X.

JUST AS SHE HAD SEEN IT IN HER DREAM.

EVILS do not always come alone. It sometimes happens that before one astounding ill is barely glanced at, another has fallen. This was the case at Stilborough.

The town awoke one morning to find that the bank had stopped payment, and that the banker was dead. Never before in the memory of man had the like consternation been known. It can be better imagined than written. At once the worst was anticipated. No one had ever been so confided in as was Mr. Peter Castlemaine. His capacity for business, his honour and integrity, his immense wealth, had passed into a proverb. People not only trusted him, but forced upon him that trust. Many and many a man had placed in his hands all they possessed : the savings perhaps of half a lifetime ; and now they saw themselves ruined and undone.

In the very midst of the commotion, there was brought to Stilborough news of that other calamity—the mysterious disappearance of young Anthony Castlemaine. He had been seen to enter the Friar's Keep the previous night, and had never come out again. The name of the Master of Greylands appeared to be mixed up in the affair ; but in what manner was not yet understood. Verily misfortunes seemed to be falling heavily just now upon the Castlemaines.

An enquiry into the death of Peter Castlemaine ended in a decision that he had died from heart disease. This was arrived at chiefly by the testimony and the urgent representation of Thomas Hill. One of the medical men was supposed to hold a contrary opinion ; and the dreadful doubt, previously spoken of, would always lie on Miss Castle-

maine : but the other was the accepted view. He was buried in the neighbouring churchyard, St. Mark's : Parson Marston, who had so often and so recently sat at his dinner table, performing the service.

Gradually the first excitement diminished. Brains and tempers calmed down. For, added to that natural depression that succeeds to undue emotion, there arose a report that things would be well, after all and everybody paid to the full.

In fact, it was so. The money that had been so long waited for—the speculation that had at last turned up trumps—was pouring in its returns. Other sources of means, hitherto buried, were also in a way to be realized.

In an incredibly short space of time, for poor Thomas Hill worked with a will, the affairs of the bank were in a way of settlement, every creditor to be fully satisfied, and the late unfortunate banker's name to be saved. Anything there had been underhanded in his dealing, Thomas Hill and Mr. Castlemaine contrived to keep from the public. Mr. Castlemaine was changed since his brother's death. That death, or something else had told upon him strangely.

But one creditor, whose name did not appear on the books, and who had put in no demand to be satisfied, was passed over in silence. Mary Ursula's fortune had been hopelessly sacrificed ; and it was already known that little, if anything, would be left for her. She knew how and why her fortune had gone ; Mr. Hill had explained it all to her ; it had helped to save her father's honour and good name ; and had it been ten times the amount she would freely have given it for such a purpose, and been thankful that she had it to give.

Seeing what it had done, she did not, as far as she herself was concerned, look upon it with one moment's regret. True she was now poor ; very poor compared with the past : she would have at most but about a hundred and fifty pounds a year : but she was in too much trouble to think much of money now. One heavy weight had been lifted—the sickening dread that the creditors would lose part or all. On that one point she was now at rest. But there were other points. There was the underlying current of fear that her father had not died of heart disease ; there was the mysterious perplexity attending the disappearance of her cousin Anthony ; and there was her own engagement to Mr. Blake-Gordon.

Her position was now so different from what it had been when he proposed to her, and the severity, the pride, the arrogance of Sir Richard were so indisputable, that she feared the worst. Moreover, she knew, from the present conduct of both father and son, that she had cause to fear it.

Twice, and twice only, had William Blake-Gordon come to her since her father's death : and he might so easily have come to her every day in her desolation ! Each time he had been kind and loving as ever ;

not a suspicion, not a hint of separation had appeared in look or tone ; but in his manner there had been something never seen before : a reticence ; a keeping back, as it were, of words that ought to come out : and instinct told her that all was not as it used to be. Days went on ; her position, as to lack of fortune, was known abroad ; and the suspense she was in was making her ill.

"I will end the suspense," she said one morning in desperation. "It is Sir Richard, I know ; not William : but at least they shall not find me willing to enter the family on bare sufferance. I will give them the opportunity of retiring from the engagement—if that be what they wish for." And she wrote a note to Mr. Blake-Gordon, and despatched it by a trusty messenger to Sir Richard's house just beyond the town. The news of the failure of the bank and death of its master, had reached Sir Richard Blake-Gordon when he was at a dinner-party. It fell upon him with startling effect. For a moment he felt half paralyzed ; and then the blood once more took its free course through his veins as he remembered that his son's marriage was yet a thing of the future.

"Never," he said to himself, with energy. "Never as long as I live. I may have a battle with William ; but I could always twist him round my fingers. In that respect he is his poor mother all over. No such weakness about me. Failed for millions ! Good Heavens, what an escape ! We shall be quite justified in breaking with the daughter : and she and William have both sense enough to see it."

He was not of those who put off disagreeable things. That very night, meeting his son when he got home, he began, after a few words of regret for the sudden death.

"A sad affair about the bank ! Who would have expected it ?"

"Who indeed !" returned William Blake-Gordon. "Every one thought the bank as safe as the Bank of England. Safer, if anything."

"It only shows how more or less liable all private concerns are to fluctuations—changes—failures—and what not," continued Sir Richard.

"Whatever this may be—failure or not—it will at least be open and straightforward," said William. "Mr. Peter Castlemaine was the soul of honour. The embarrassments must have arisen from other quarters, and Thomas Hill says the trouble and anxiety have killed him."

"Poor man ! People are expecting it to be an awful failure. Not five shillings in the pound for the creditors, and all the Castlemaine family ruined. This must terminate your engagement."

The sudden mandate fell on the young man's ears with a shock. He thought at the first moment his father must be jesting.

"It must terminate my engagement?" he retorted, catching sight of the dark stern countenance. "What, give up Mary Castlemaine ? Never, father ! Never will I do it, so long as I shall live."

"Yes, you will," said Sir Richard quietly. "I cannot allow you to sacrifice your prospects in life."

"To give up her would be to sacrifice all the prospects I care for."

"Tush, William!"

"Think what it is you would advise, sir!" spoke the son with ill-suppressed emotion. "Putting aside my own feelings, think of the dishonour to my name! I should be shunned by all good and true men; I should shun myself. Why, I would not live through such dishonour."

Sir Richard took a pinch of snuff.

"These misfortunes only render it the more urgent for me to carry out the engagement, sir. Is it possible that you do not see it? Mary Castlemaine's happiness is, I believe, bound up in me; and mine, I freely avow it, is in hers. Surely, father, you would not part us!"

"Listen, William," spoke Sir Richard, in the calm, stern tones he could assume at will, more telling, more penetrating than the loudest passion. "Should Miss Castlemaine become portionless—as I believe it will turn out she has become—you cannot marry her. Or, if you do, it would be with my curse. I would not advise you, for your own sake, to invoke that. You can look elsewhere for a wife: there are numbers of young women as eligible as ever was Miss Castlemaine."

Long they talked together, far on into the night, the stern tones on the one hand becoming persuasive ones; the opposition sinking into silence. When they separated, Sir Richard felt that he had three parts gained his point.

"It is all right," said he mentally, as he stalked up to bed with his candle. "William was always ultra dutiful."

Sir Richard interdicted his son's visits to Miss Castlemaine; and the one or two scant calls the young man made on her, were made in disobedience. But this state of things could not last. William Blake-Gordon, with his yielding nature, had ever possessed a rather exaggerated idea of the duty a son owes his father: moreover, he knew instinctively that Mary would never consent to marry in opposition to Sir Richard, even though he brought himself to do it: and he was as a very reed in the stronger hands. It soon became known abroad that Miss Castlemaine's fortune had certainly been sacrificed. Sir Richard was cold and distant to his son, the young man miserable.

One day the baronet returned to the charge; intending his mandate to be final. They were in the library. William was listening in silence when the note was brought from Miss Castlemaine. It could not have arrived more seasonably for Sir Richard's views. The young man opened it; read it to the end; and passed it to his father in silence.

"A very sensible girl, upon my word," exclaimed Sir Richard, when he had mastered the contents by the aid of a double eye-glass. "She sees things in their right light. Castlemaine was, after all, an extremely

honourable man, and put proper notions into her. This greatly facilitates matters, William. Our path is now quite smoothed out for us. I will myself write to her. You can do the same, if you are so disposed. Had this only come before, what arguments it might have saved ! ”

Upon which the baronet sat down, and indited a seemingly kind, but really insolent epistle, accepting her alternative. William wrote one also.

“ MY DARLING,

“ I suppose we must separate, but all happiness for me is over in this world. You will, however, accord me a final interview ; a moment for explanation ; I cannot part from you without that. I will be with you this afternoon at four o'clock.

“ In spite of all,

“ I am for ever yours—and yours only,

“ WILLIAM BLAKE-GORDON.”

Unlike his father's letter, there was no hypocrisy in this, no studied form of words. When he wrote that all happiness for him was over, he meant it ; and he wrote truly. Perhaps he deserved no less : but, if he merited blame, judgment might accord him some pity with it.

When Mary received the letters, she felt certain of their contents before a word was seen. Sir Richard would not himself have written but to break off the engagement. He had not even called upon her in all these long, weary days of desolation and misery : and there could be but one motive for this unkind neglect. His note would now explain it.

But when Mary came to read the letters, the pain was more than her wounded spirit—so tried in the past few weeks—could bear ; and with a brief but violent storm of sobs, with which no tears came, she tore the baronet's in two and threw it into the fire.

“ At least he might have done it differently,” she said to herself in her anguish. “ He might have written in a manner that would have made me feel it less.”

It was one of her first lessons in the world's harshness, in the selfish nature of man. Happy for her if in her altered circumstances she had not many such to learn !

When William Blake-Gordon, true to his appointment, reached the Bank at four o'clock, he was admitted. How different an aspect the house presented to the bustle and the sociality of the days gone by ! A stillness, as of a dead city, reigned. Rooms that had re-echoed with merry voices and light footsteps above, with the ring of gold and the tones of busy men below, were now silent and deserted. No change of any kind had yet been made in the household arrangements, but that was soon to come. The servants would be discharged, the costly furniture was already marked for the hammer ;

Mrs. Webb must leave, and—what was to be the course of Miss Castle-maine? She had not even asked herself the question, while the engagement with Mr. Blake-Gordon remained officially unbroken.

The butler opened the door to him and ushered him into the drawing-room. Mary came forward to greet him with her pale, sad face—a face that startled her lover. He clasped her to him, and she burst into sobs and tears. There are moments of anguish when pride gives way.

"Oh, my darling!" he cried, scarcely less agitated than herself. "You are feeling this cruel decision almost unto death! Why did you write that letter?—why did you not remain firm?—and thereby tacitly insist on our engagement being fulfilled?"

Never had his weakness of nature been more betrayed than then. "Why did not *she* insist?"—as if conscious that he was powerless to do it! She felt it keenly: she felt that in this, at least, a gulf lay between them.

"What I have done is for the best," she said, gently disengaging herself, and suppressing the signs of her emotion, as she motioned him to a seat. "In my altered circumstances I felt—at least I feared—that no happiness could await our marriage. Your father, in the first place, would never have given his consent."

"There are times when duty to a father should give place to duty to ourself," he returned, forgetting how singularly this argument was contradicted by his conduct. "All my happiness in life is over."

"As you wrote to me," she said. "But by and by, when you shall have forgotten all this, William, and time has brought things round, you will meet with some one who will be able to make you happy: perhaps as much so as I should have done: and you will look back on these days as a dream."

"Mary!"

"And it will be better so."

"And you?" he asked, with a stifled groan of remorse.

"I?" she returned, with a smile, half sad, half derisive. "I am nobody now. You have a place to fill in the world, I shall soon be heard of no more."

"But where are you going to live, Mary? You have nothing left out of the wreck."

"I have a little. Enough for my future wants. At present I shall go on a visit to Greylands' Rest. My uncle urges it, and he is the nearest representative of my father. Depend upon it, I shall meet with some occupation in life that will make me contented, if not happy."

"Until you marry," he said. "Marry some man more noble than I; more worthy of you."

For a moment she looked steadily at him, and then her face flushed with pain. But she would not contradict it. She began to think that she had never quite understood the nature of Mr. Blake-Gordon.

"In the future you and I will probably not meet often, William ; if at all," she resumed. "But you will carry with you my best wishes, and I shall always rejoice to hear of your happiness and prosperity. The past we must, both of us, try to forget."

"I shall never forget it," was the impulsive answer.

"Do you remember my dream ?" she sadly asked. "The one I told you of that ball night. How strangely it is being fulfilled ! And, do you know, I think that beautiful Dresden vase, that papa broke, must have been an omen of the evil in store for the house."

He stood up now, feeling how miserable it all was, feeling his own littleness. For a little while longer they talked together : but Mary wished the interview over.

When it came to the actual parting, she nearly broke down. It was very hard and bitter. Her life had not so long ago promised to be so bright ! Now all was at an end. As to marriage—never for her : of that kind of happiness the future contained none. Calmness, patience in suffering, resignation, and in time even contentment, she might find in some path of duty ; but beyond that, nothing.

They stood close together, her hands held in his, their hearts aching with pain, yearning each to each, with that sad yearning that is born of utter hopelessness. A parting like this seems to be more cruel than the parting of death.

"Come what may, Mary, I shall love you, and you alone, to the end. You tell me I shall marry : it may be so : I know not : but if so, my wife, whomsoever she may be, will never have my love ; never, never. And, if those who have loved on earth are permitted to meet in Heaven, you and I, my best and dearest, shall assuredly find together in Eternity the happiness denied us here."

She was but mortal, after all ; and the words sent a strange thrill of pleasure through her heart. Ah, no ! he would never love another as he had loved her : she knew it ; and it might be—it might be—that she should recognise each other in the bliss of a never-ending Hereafter.

And so they parted, each casting upon the other a long, last lingering look ; just as Mary had already imagined in her foreboding dream.

That evening, as Miss Castlemaine was sitting alone, musing on the past, the present, and the future, nursing her misery and her desolation, the door opened and Thomas Hill was shown in. She had seen more of him than of any one else, save Mrs. Webb, since the ruin.

"Miss Mary," said he, when they had shaken hands, "I've come to ask you whether the report can be true that your engagement is at an end ?"

"It is quite true," replied Mary, with difficulty controlling her voice. "I am glad that it is so."

"Glad ?" he repeated, looking at her, with his kindly old eyes.

"Yes. It is much better so. Sir Richard, in the altered state of my fortunes, would never think me a sufficiently good match for his son."

"But the honour, Miss Mary! Or rather the *dishonour* of their breaking it off! And your happiness? Is that not to be thought of?"

"All things that are wrong will right themselves," she replied with a quiet smile. "At least, Sir Richard thinks so."

"And Mr. Blake-Gordon? Is he willing to submit to the separation quietly? Pardon me, Miss Mary. If your father were alive, I should know my place too well to say a word on the subject: but—but my heart resents all slight on you as *he* would have resented it. I could not rest until I knew the truth."

"Say no more about it," breathed Mary. "Let the topic lie between us as one that had never had existence. It will be for my happiness."

"But can nothing be done?" persisted Thomas Hill. "Should not your uncle go and expostulate with them, and expose their villainy—for I can call it by no other name."

"Not for worlds," she said, hastily. "It is *I* who have broken the engagement, Mr. Hill; not they. I wrote this morning and restored to Mr. Blake-Gordon his freedom: this afternoon I bade him farewell for ever."

"And you?—what are your plans for the future?—And, oh, forgive me for being anxious, my dear young lady! I had you on my knee often as a little one, and in my heart you have been as dear to me and seemed to grow up as my own daughter. Where shall you live?"

"I cannot yet tell where. For the present I am going on a visit to my Uncle James. While there I shall have leisure to think of the future. My hundred and fifty pounds a year, and that much you all say will be secured to me——"

"And the whole of what I possess, Miss Mary."

"My hundred and fifty pounds a year will seem as a sufficient income to me, once I have brought my mind down from its heights," she continued, with one of her sweet sad smiles, as though unmindful of the interruption. "Trust me, my dear old friend, the future shall not be as gloomy as, by the expression of your face, you seem to anticipate. I am not so weak as to throw away my life in repining, and in wishing for what Heaven sees fit to deny me."

"Heaven?" he repeated, in an accent of reproof.

"Let us say circumstances then. But, in the very worst fate, it may be that Heaven's hand may be working—over-ruling all for our eventual good. My future life can be a useful one; and—I, if not happy, at least contented."

But that night, in the solitude of her chamber, she opened a small box, containing nothing but a few faded white rose-leaves. Before they were again put away out of sight, tears more bitter than any shed in her whole life, had fallen upon them.

CHAPTER XI.

INSIDE THE NUNNERY.

THE time had gone on at Greylands; and its great theme of excitement, the disappearance of Anthony Castlemaine, was an event of the past. Not an iota of evidence had arisen to tell how he disappeared: but an uneasy suspicion of Mr. Castlemaine lurked in corners. John Bent had been the chief instigator in this. As truly as he believed the sun shone in the heavens, so did he believe that Anthony Castlemaine had been put out of the way by his uncle; sent out of the world, in fact, that the young man might not imperil his possession of Greylands' Rest. He did not say to the public, in so many words, Mr. Castlemaine killed his nephew; that might not have been prudent; but the bent of his conviction could not be mistaken; and when alone with his wife he scrupled not to talk freely. All Greylands did not share in the opinion. The superstitious villagers attributed the disappearance to be due in some un conjectural manner to the dreaded spirit of the Grey Monk, haunting the Friar's Keep. Their fears of the place were augmented ten fold. Not one would go at night within sight of it, save on the greatest compulsion; and Commodore Teague (a brave, fearless man, as was proved by his living so near the grim building alone) had whispered that the Grey Friar was abroad again with his lamp, for he had twice seen him glide past the casement. What with one fear and another, Greylands was not altogether in a state of calmness.

Mary Ursula had come to Greylands' Rest. The once happy home at Stilborough was given up, the furniture sold: and the affairs of the bank were virtually settled. The opinion that a sufficient sum would be saved from the wreck to bring her in about a hundred and fifty pounds per annum had proved correct; that income was secured to her for life and would be at her disposal at death. All claims were being paid; liberal presents were given to the clerks and servants, thus thrown suddenly out of employment; and not a reproach, or shadow of it, could be cast on the house of Castlemaine.

Before Mary had been a week at Greylands' Rest, she was mentally forming her plans for leaving it. Mr. Castlemaine would fain have kept her there always; he was fond and proud of her; he thought there was no other woman like her in the world. Not so Mrs. Castlemaine. She resented her husband's love and reverence for his niece; and she, little-minded, full of petty spite, was actually jealous of her. She had always felt a jealousy of the banker's daughter, living in her luxurious home at Stilborough, keeping the high society that Mrs. Castlemaine did not keep; she had a shrewd idea that she herself, with her little tempers, and her petty frivolities, was sometimes compared unfavourably with Mary Ursula by her husband,

wife though she was; and she had far rather some disagreeable animal had taken up its abode at Greylands' Rest for good, than this grand, noble, beautiful girl. Now and again, even in those first few days, she contrived to betray this: and, it may be, that this served to hasten Mary's plans. Flora, too, was a perpetual source of annoyance to everybody but her mother; and the young lady was as rude to Miss Castlemaine as to other people.

Since her parting with Mr. Blake-Gordon, an idea had dawned and been growing in Mary Ursula's mind. It was, that she should join the Sisterhood of the Grey Ladies. The more she dwelt upon it, the greater grew her conviction that it would be just the life now suited to her. Unlike Mr. Castlemaine, she had always held the Sisters in reverence and respect. They were self-denying; they led a useful life before Heaven; they were of no account in the world: what better career could she propose or wish for herself, now that near and dear social ties were denied her? And she took her resolution: though she almost dreaded to impart it to her uncle.

Mr. Castlemaine stood one morning at the window of his business room, looking out on the whitened landscape, for snow covered the ground. The genial weather that came in so early had given place to winter again. The sad, worn look that might be seen lately on the Master of Greylands' face, though rarely when in company, sat on it now. He pushed his dark hair from his brow with a hasty hand, as some thought, worse than the rest disturbed him, and a heavy groan escaped his lips. Drowning it with a cough, for at that very moment somebody knocked at the study door, he held his breath but did not answer. The knock came again.

He strode to open the door with a frown. It was an understood thing in the house that this room was sacred to its master. There stood Mary Ursula in her deep mourning.

"I have ventured to come to you here, Uncle James," she said, "as I wish to speak with you alone. Can you spare me some minutes?"

"Any number to you. And remember, my dear, that *you* are always welcome here."

He gave her a chair, shut down his bureau and locked it, and took a seat himself. For a moment she paused, and then began in some hesitation.

"Uncle James, I have been forming my plans."

"Plans?" he echoed.

"And I have come to tell them to you before I tell any one else."

"Well?" said Mr. Castlemaine, wondering what was coming.

"I should like—I must have some occupation in life, you know?"

"Well?"

"And I have not been long in making up my mind what it shall be. I shall join the Sisterhood."

"Join the what?"

"The Sisters at the Grey Nunnery, uncle."

Mr. Castlemaine pushed back his chair in angry astonishment when the sense of the words fully reached him. "The Sisters at the Grey Nunnery!" he indignantly cried. "Join those Grey women who lead such an idle, gossiping, meddling life, that I have no patience when I think of them! Never shall you do that, Mary Ursula."

"It seems to me that you have always mistaken them, uncle," she said; "have done them wrong in your heart. They are noble women, and they are leading a noble life——"

"A petty, obscure life," he interrupted.

"It is obscure; but in its usefulness and self-sacrifice it must be noble. What would Greylands be without their care?"

"A great deal better than with it."

"They help the poor, they tend the sick, they teach the young ones; they try to make the fishermen think a little of God. Who would do it if they were not here, uncle? Do you know, I have thought so much of it in the past few days that I *long* to join them."

"This is utter folly!" cried Mr. Castlemaine; and he had never felt so inclined to be angry with his niece. "To join this meddling Sisterhood would be to sacrifice all your future prospects in life."

"I have no prospects left to sacrifice," returned Mary Ursula.

"You know that, Uncle James."

"No prospects? Nonsense! Because that dishonourable rascal, William Blake-Gordon, has chosen to throw you up and make himself a by-word in the mouths of men, are you to renounce the world? Many a better gentleman than he, my dear, will be seeking you before many months have gone by."

"I shall never marry," was her firm answer. "Never, never. Whether I joined the Sisters or not; whether I retired from the world, or mixed to my dying day in all its pomps and gaities; still I should never marry. So you see, Uncle James, I have now to make my future, and to create for myself an object in life."

"Well, we'll leave that. Meanwhile your present home must be with me, Mary Ursula. I cannot spare you. I should like you to make up your mind to stay in it always, unless other and nearer ties shall call you forth."

"You are very kind, Uncle James; you always have been kind. But I—I must be independent," she added, with a smile and a slight flush. "Forgive the seeming ingratitude, uncle dear."

"Very independent, you would be, if you joined those living-by-rule women!"

"In one sense I should be thoroughly independent, uncle. My income will be most welcome to them, for they are, as you know, very

poor. And I shall still be close to Greylands' Rest: I shall be able to come here to see you often."

"Mary Ursula, I will hear no more of this," he cried, quite passionately. "You shall never do it with my consent."

She rose and laid her pleading hands upon his. "Uncle, pardon me, but my mind is made up. I have not decided hastily, or without due consideration. By day and by night I have dwelt upon it—I—I have *prayed* over it, uncle—and I plainly see it is the best thing for me. I would sooner spend my days here than anywhere, because I shall be near you."

"And I want you to be near me. But not in a nunnery."

"It is not a nunnery now, you know, Uncle James, though the building happens still to bear the name. Though I take up my abode there, I take no vows, remember. I do not renounce the world. Should any necessity arise—though I think it will not—for me to resume my place in society, I am at full liberty to put off my grey gown and bonnet, and do so."

"What do you think your father would have said to this, Mary Ursula?"

"Were my father alive, Uncle James, the question never could have arisen; my place would have been with him. But I think—if he could see me now under all these altered circumstances—I think he would say to me Go."

There was no turning her. James Castlemaine saw it: and when she quitted the room he felt that the project, unless some hindrance intervened, would be carried out.

"The result of being clever enough to have opinions of one's own!" muttered Mr. Castlemaine.

Turning to the window again, he stood there, looking out. Looking out, but seeing nothing. The Friar's Keep opposite, rising dark and grim from contrast with the intervening white landscape; the sparkling blue sea beyond, glittering in the frosty sunshine. Mr. Castlemaine had other motives than the world knew of for wishing to keep his niece out of the Grey Nunnery; but he did not see how it was to be done.

Mary Ursula had passed into her own chamber: the best room in the house, and luxuriously furnished. It was generally kept for distinguished guests: and Mrs. Castlemaine had thought a plainer one might have served the young lady, their relative; but, as she muttered resentfully to the empty air, if Mr. Castlemaine could load the banker's daughter with gold and precious stones, he'd go out of his way to do it.

Drawing her chair to the fire, Mary sat down and thought out her plan. And, the longer she dwelt upon it, the more did she feel convinced that she was right in its adoption. A few short weeks before, and had any one told her she would enter the Nunnery and become one of the Grey Sisters, she had started back in aversion. But ideas change

with circumstances. Then she had a happy home of splendour, an indulgent father, riches that seemed unbounded at command, the smiles of the gay world, and a lover to whom she was shortly to be united. Now she had none of these : all had been wrested from her at one fell swoop. To the outward world she had seemed to take her misfortunes calmly : but none knew how they had wrung her very soul. It had seemed to her that her heart was broken : it seemed to her as though some retired and quiet place to rest in, were absolutely needful while she recovered, if she ever did recover, the effects of these calamities. But she did not want to sit down under her grief and nourish it : she had prayed earnestly, and did still pray, that it would please Heaven to enable her to find consolation in her future life, and that it might be one of usefulness to others, as it could not be one of happiness to herself. But a provision lay upon her that happiness would eventually come ; that in persevering in her laid-out path, she should find it.

"The sooner I enter upon it, the better," she said, rising from her chair and shaking out the crape folds of her black silk dress. "And there's nothing to wait for, now that I have broken it to my uncle."

Glancing at her own face as she passed a mirror, she halted to look at the change that trouble had made in it. Others might not notice it, but to herself it was very perceptible. The beautiful features were thinner than of yore, the cheeks bore a fainter rose-colour ; her stately form had lost somewhat of its roundness. Ah, it was not her own sorrow that had mostly told upon Mary Castlemaine ; it was the sudden death of her father, and the agonizing doubt attending on it.

"If I could but know that it was God's own will that he should die !" she uttered, raising her hands in supplication. "And there's that other dreadful trouble—that awful doubt—about poor Anthony!"

Descending the stairs, she opened the door of the red parlour, and entered on a scene of turbulence. Miss Flora was in one of her most spiteful and provoking humours, and was trying to kick Ethel, who held her at arms' length. Her pretty face was inflamed, her pretty hair hung wild—and Flora's face and hair were both as pretty as they could well be.

"Flora !" said Miss Castlemaine, advancing to the rescue. "Flora for shame ! Unless I had seen you in this passion, I had not believed it."

"I *will* kick her, then ! It's through her I did not go with mamma in the carriage to Stilborough."

"It was mamma who would not take you," said Ethel. "She said she had some private business there, and did not want you with her."

"She would have taken me ; you know she would ; but for your telling her I had not done my French exercise, you ugly, spiteful thing."

"She asked me whether you had done it, and I said no."

"And you ought to have said yes! You ill-natured, wicked, interfering dromedary!"

"Be still, Flora," interposed Miss Castlemaine. "Unless you are, I will call your papa. How can you so forget yourself?"

"You have no business to interfere, Mary Ursula! The house is not yours; you are only staying in it."

"True," said Miss Castlemaine, calmly. "And I shall not be very much longer in it, Flora. I am going away soon."

"I shall be glad of that," retorted the rude child; "and I'm sure mamma will be. She says it is a shame that you should be let take up the best bedroom."

"Oh, Flora!" interposed Ethel.

"And she says——"

What further revelations the damsel might be contemplating, in regard to her mother, were summarily cut short. Harry Castlemaine had entered in time to hear what she was saying, and he quietly lifted her from the room. Outside he treated her to what she dreaded, though it was not often she got it from him—a severe shaking; and she ran away howling.

"She is being ruined," said Harry. "Mrs. Castlemaine never corrects her, or allows her to be corrected. I wish my father would take her seriously in hand!"

Peace restored, Mary Ursula told them what she had just been telling Mr. Castlemaine. She was about to become a Grey Sister. Harry laughed: he did not believe a syllable of it; Ethel, more clear sighted, burst into tears.

"Don't, don't leave us!" she whispered, clinging to Mary in her astonishment and distress. "You see what my life is here! I am without love, without sympathy. I have only my books and my music and my drawings and the sea! but for them my heart would starve. Oh Mary! it has been so different since you came: I have had you to love."

Mary Ursula put her arm round Ethel. She herself, standing in so much need of love, had felt the tender affection of this fresh young girl already entwining itself around her heart, as the grateful tree feels the tendrils of the clinging vine.

"You will be what I shall most regret in leaving, Ethel. But, my dear, we shall meet constantly. You can see me at the Nunnery when you will; and I shall come here sometimes."

"Look here, Mary Ursula," said Harry, all his lightness checked. "Sooner than you should go to that old Nunnery, I'll burn it down."

"No, you will not, Harry."

"I will. The crazy old building won't be much loss to the place, and the ruins would be picturesque."

He was so speaking only to cover his real concern. The project was no less displeasing to him than to his father. "You do not mean this, Mary Ursula!" But the grave look of her earnest face effectually answered him.

"It is I, who shall miss you most," cried Ethel. "Oh, can nothing be done?"

"Nothing," said Mary, smiling. "Our paths, Ethel, will probably be very different in life. You will marry, and social ties will form about you. I——" she broke off suddenly.

"I intend to marry Ethel myself," said Harry, kicking back a large live coal that flew far out into the hearth.

"Be quiet, Harry," said Ethel, a shade of annoyance in her tone.

"Why, you know it's true," he returned, without looking at her.

"True! When we are like brother and sister!"

Miss Castlemaine glanced from one to the other. She did not know how to take this. That Harry liked Ethel and was very fond of paying her all the attention he could, told nothing; for he did the same by other young ladies.

"It was only last week I asked her to fix the day," said Harry.

"And I told you to go and talk nonsense elsewhere; not to me," retorted Ethel, her tone betraying her real vexation.

"If you won't have me, Ethel, you'll drive me to desperation. I might go off and marry one of the Grey Sisters in revenge. It should be Sister Ann. She is a charming picture; one to take a young man's heart by storm."

Mary Ursula looked keenly at him: in all this there was a semblance of something not real. It struck her that he was *wanting to make it appear* he wished for Ethel, when in fact he did not.

"Harry," she cried, speaking upon impulse, "you have not, I hope been falling in love with anybody undesirable?"

"But I have," said Harry, his face flushing. "Don't I tell you who it is?—Sister Ann."

"You are very random, you know, Harry," said Miss Castlemaine, slowly. "You talk to young ladies without meaning anything—but they may not detect that. Take care you do not go too far some day, and find yourself in a mesh."

Harry Castlemaine turned his bright face on his cousin. "I never talk seriously but to one person, Mary Ursula. And that's Ethel."

He left the room with the last words, saying something about Commodore Teague. Mary spoke to Ethel.

"My dear—if you have no objection to confide in me—is there anything between you and Harry?"

"Nothing, Mary," was the answer, and Ethel blushed the soft blush of girlish modesty as she said it. "Last year he teased me very much, making me often angry; but latterly he has been better. The idea

of my marrying him !—when we have grown up together like brother and sister ! It would seem hardly proper. I like Harry very much indeed as a brother ; but as to marrying him, why I'd rather never be married at all.—Here's the carriage coming back ! Mamma must have forgotten something."

Mrs. Castlemaine got out of the carriage, and they heard her hold a colloquy with Flora. She came to the room, looking angry.

"Where's Harry ?" she demanded, in the sharp, unkindly tones that so often grated on the ear of those offending her. "I was told he was here."

"He was here, mamma, until a minute or two ago," said Ethel. "I think he is gone to Commodore Teague's."

"He is like an eel," was the pettish rejoinder. "You never know when you have him. As to that vulgar, gossiping old Teague, that they make so much of and are always running after, I can't think what they see in him."

"Perhaps it is his gossip that they like," suggested Ethel.

"Well, I want Harry. He has been beating Flora."

"I don't think he beat her, mamma."

"Oh you great story-teller !" exclaimed Flora, putting in her head. "He shook me till all my bones rattled."

Mrs. Castlemaine shut the door with a click. And the next, they saw, was Miss Flora dressed in her best and going off with her mamma in the carriage.

"With this injudicious treatment the child has hardly a chance to become better," murmured Mary Ursula. "Ethel, have you a mind for a walk ?"

"Yes : with you."

They dressed themselves and started for the village, walking lightly over the crisp snow, under the clear, blue sky. Miss Castlemaine was bound for the Grey Nunnery ; Ethel, protesting she would do no act or part towards helping her to enter it, went off to see some of the fishermen's wives on the cliff.

Passing through the outer gate, Mary Ursula rang at the bell, and was admitted by Sister Phœby. A narrow passage took her into the hall. Opening from it on the left hand was a small room, plain and comfortable. It was called the reception parlour, but was the one usually sat in by the Grey Ladies : in fact, they had no other sitting-room that could be called furnished. Dinner was taken in a bare, bleak room, looking to the sea ; it was used as the school-room, and contained only a table and some forms. Miss Castlemaine was shown into the reception parlour. Two of the ladies were in it : Sister Margaret writing, Sister Betsey making lint.

An indication of Miss Castlemaine's wish to join the Sisters had already reached the Nunnery, and they knew not how to make enough

of her. It had caused quite a commotion of delight. To number a Castlemaine amidst them, especially one so much esteemed, so high and grand and good, as the banker's daughter, was an honour hardly to be believed in; the small fortune she would bring seemed like riches in itself, and they coveted the companionship of the sweet and gentle lady for their own sakes. Her joining them would swell the Community to thirteen; but no reason existed against that.

Sister Margaret put down her pen, Sister Betsey her linen, as their visitor entered. They gave her the one arm-chair by the fire—Sister Mildred's own place—and Mary put back her crape veil as she sat down. Calm, quiet, good, looked these ladies in their simple, grey gowns, their hair smoothly braided under the white cap of worked muslin; and Mary Ursula seemed to feel a foretaste of peace in the time when the like dress, the like serene life, would be hers. The superior sisters came flocking in on hearing she was there; all were present save Sister Mildred: Margaret, Charlotte, Betsey, Grizzel, and Mona. They hastened to tell Miss Castlemaine of a hope, or rather project, they had been entertaining—namely, that when she joined the community, she should become its head. Sister Mildred, incapacitated by her long illness, had long wished to resign control; and would have done so before, but that Sister Margaret, on whom is ought to descend, shrunk from taking it. Miss Castlemaine sat in doubt: the proposal took her by surprise.

"I do all the writing that has to be done, and keep the accounts, and you see that's all I'm good for," said Sister Margaret to Miss Castlemaine, in a tone of confidence. "If I were put in Sister Mildred's place, and had to order this and decide that, I should be lost. Why, if they came and asked me whether the dinner for the day should consist of fresh herrings, or pork and peas-pudding, I should never know which to say."

"Sister Mildred may regain her health," observed Miss Castlemaine.

"But she'll never regain her hearing," put in Sister Grizzel, a little, quick, fresh-coloured, talkative woman. "And that tells very much against her as Superioress. In fact, her continuing as such is like a farce."

"Besides, she herself wants to give it up," said Sister Charlotte. "Oh, Miss Castlemaine, if you would but accept it in her place! You would make us happy."

Mary Ursula said she must take time for consideration. She was invited to go up to Sister Mildred, who would be sure to think it a slight if she did not. So she was conducted upstairs by the ladies, Charlotte and Mona, and found herself in a long, dark, narrow corridor which had doors on either side—the nuns' cells of Cold. The Head Sister's room was at the extreme end—a neat, little chamber, whose

casement looked on to the sea, with a small bed in a corner. Sister Mildred was dressed and sat by the fire. She was a fair-complexioned, pleasant-looking, talkative woman, slightly deformed, and past fifty, but still very light and active. Of her own accord, she introduced the subject of resigning her post to Miss Castlemaine, and pressed her urgently to take it.

"The holding it has become a trouble to me, my dear," she said "Instead of lying here at peace with nothing to think of—and some days I can't get up at all—I am being referred to perpetually. Sister Margaret refuses to take it; she says she's of more good for writing and account keeping. As to Sister Charlotte, she is always amid the little ones in the school; she likes teaching—and so there it is. Your taking it, my dear, would solve a difficulty; and we could hardly let one, bearing the honoured name of Castlemaine, be among us, and not be placed at our head."

"You may get better; you may regain your health," said Mary.

"And, please God, I shall," cheerfully returned Sister Mildred, when she could be made to comprehend the remark. "But I shall be none the more competent for my post. My deafness has become so much worse since health failed that that of itself unfits me for it. The Sisters will tell you so. Why, my dear, you don't know the mistakes it leads to. I hear just the opposite of what's really said, and give orders accordingly. Sister Margaret wrote a letter and transacted some business all wrong through this, and it has caused ever so much trouble to set it to rights. It is mortifying to her and to me."

"To all of us," put in Sister Charlotte.

"Why, my dear Miss Castlemaine, just look at my misapprehension. Only the other day," continued the Superioress, who dearly loved a gossip when she could get it, "Sister Ann came running up here in a flurry, her eyes sparkling, saying Parson Marston was below. 'What, below then,' I asked. 'Yes,' she said, 'below then,' and ran off again. I wondered what could have brought the parson here, for we don't see him at the Nunnery from year's end to year's end, but was grateful to him for thinking of us, and felt that I ought to get down to receive and thank him. So I turned out of bed and scuffled into my petticoats, slipping on my best gown and a new cap, and down I went. Would you believe it, my dear young lady, that it was not Parson Marston at all, but a fine sucking pig!"

Mary could not avoid a laugh.

"A beautiful sucking-pig, that lasted us two days when cooked, sent to us as a present by Farmer Watson, good, grateful man, whose little boy Sister Mona went to nurse through a fever. I had mistaken what she said, you see, and got up for nothing. But that's the way it is with me, and the sooner I am superseded by somebody who can hear, the better."

"I have said lately, Sister Mildred, that you ought to change your room," cried Sister Margaret. "In this one you are sometimes exposed to a sharp breeze."

"Cheese?" returned the deaf lady, mistaking the word. "Bread and cheese! By all means order it into the parlour if Miss Castlemaine would like some. Dear me, I am very remiss!"

"No, no," returned Sister Margaret, laughing at the mistake, and speaking in her ear, "I only suggested it might be better for your deafness if you exchanged this room for a warmer one."

"Is that all! Then why did you mention cheese? No, no; I am not going to change my room. I like this one. And what does Miss Castlemaine say?"

Mary stood at the casement window. The grand, expansive sea lay below and around. She could see nothing else. An Indiaman was sailing majestically in the distance; on the sails of one of the fishing boats, dotting the surface nearer, some frosted snow had gathered and was sparkling in the sunshine. There she stood, reflecting.

"For the sake of constantly enjoying this scene of wondrous beauty, it would be almost worth while to come, let alone other inducements!" she exclaimed mentally in her enthusiasm. "As to acceding to their wish of taking the lead, I believe it is what I should like, what I am fitted for."

And when she quitted Sister Mildred's room she left her promise of acceptance within it.

Meanwhile an unpleasant adventure had just happened to Ethel. Her visits to the wives of the fishermen on the cliff concluded, and seeing no sign yet of Mary Ursula's leaving the Nunnery, she thought she would make a call on Mrs. Bent, and wait there. She arrived at an inopportune moment. Mr. and Mrs. Bent were enjoying a dispute.

It appeared that a letter had been delivered at the inn that morning, addressed to Anthony Castlemaine: the third letter that had come for him since his disappearance. The two first bore the postmark of Gap, this one the London post-mark, and all were addressed in the same handwriting. Mrs. Bent had urged her husband to hand over the others to the Master of Greylands: she was now urging the like as to this one. John Bent, though in most matters under his wife's finger and thumb, had wholly refused to listen to her: he should keep the letters in his own safe custody, he said, until the writer, or some one nearly connected with Mr. Anthony over the water, appeared to claim them. Mrs. Bent was unable to stir his decision: since the fatal night connected with the Friar's Keep, she could but notice that John had altered. He was more silent than of yore; minded her less and maintained his own will better: which was of course not an agreeable change to Mrs. Bent.

They were in their ordinary room, facing the sea. The door stood open as usual, but a screen of two folds now intervened between the fire-place and the draught. John sat in his carved elbow-chair; Mrs. Bent stood by, folding clothes at the table; which was drawn near the fire from its place under the window.

"I tell you, then, John Bent, you might be taken up and prosecuted for it," she said, sprinkling the linen so vigorously that some splashes went on his face. "Keeping other people's letters!"

"The letters are directed here, to my house, Dorothy woman; and I shall keep them till some proper person turns up to receive them," was John's answer, delivered without irritation as he wiped his face.

"The proper person is Mr. Castlemaine. Just take your elbow away: you'll be upsetting the basin. He is the young man's uncle."

"Now look here, wife. You've said that before, and once for all I tell you I'll not do it. Mr. Castlemaine is the last person in the world I'd hand the letters to. What would he do with them?—Put 'em in the fire, I dare be bound. If, as I believe; I believe it to my very heart; Mr. Castlemaine took his nephew's life that night in the Friar's Keep——"

"Hist!" said Mrs. Bent, the rosy colour on her face fading as a sound caught her ear; "hist, man!"

And, for once more alarmed than angry, she looked behind the screen, and found herself face to face with Ethel Reene.

"Mercy be good to us!" she exclaimed, seeing by the young lady's white face that they had been overheard. And, scarcely knowing what she did, she dragged the horror-stricken girl into the kitchen, before John.

"Now you've done it!" she cried, turning upon him. "You'd better pack up and be off to jail: for if Miss Ethel tells the Master of Greylands what she has heard, he'll put you there."

"No, he won't," said John, full of contrition for the mischief he had done, but nevertheless determined not to eat his words, and believing the suspicion must have reached the young lady sooner or later.

"You cannot think this of papa!" said Ethel, sinking into a chair.

"Well, Miss Ethel, it is a great mystery, as you must know," said the landlord, who had risen. "I think the Master of Greylands' could solve it if he liked."

"But—but, Mr. Bent, what you said is most dreadful!"

"I'm heartily sorry you chanced to overhear it, Miss Ethel. There's no cause to wink at me like that, wife. The words are said, and I can't unsay them."

"But—do—you—believe it?" gasped Ethel.

"Yes, he does believe it," burst forth Mrs. Bent, losing sight of prudence in her anger against her husband. "If he does not get into some awful trouble one of these days through his tongue, his name's

not John Bent.—And there's Miss Castlemaine of Stilborough crossing over the road !”

Not less overcome by terror and dismay than Mrs. Bent had been by anger, Ethel rushed out of the house and burst into a storm of hysterical sobs. Mary Ursula, wondering much and full of concern, drew her arm within her own and went over to the little solitary bench that stood by the sea. She stammered an incoherent word or two between her sobs, and at the best was indistinct.

“I understand, Ethel. Be calm. John Bent has been making a terrible charge against my Uncle James.”

Ethel clung to her. She admitted that it was so. She said it had frightened her, though she did not believe it.

“Neither do I believe it,” returned Miss Castlemaine calmly. “I heard this some time ago—I mean the suspicion that is rife in Greylands—but I am sorry that you should have been startled with it. That my uncle is incapable of anything of the kind—and only to say as much seems a cruel insult on him—I am perfectly sure of ; and I am content to wait the elucidation that no doubt time will bring.”

“But how wicked of John Bent !” cried Ethel.

“Ethel dear, I have gone through so much misery latterly, that it has *subdued* me, and I think I have learnt the great precept not to judge another,” said Mary Ursula sadly. “I do not blame John Bent. I respect him. That a strange mystery does encompass the doings of that February night—so fatal for me as well as for poor Anthony—I cannot ignore : and I speak not now of the disappearance only. There's reason in what John Bent says—that Mr. Castlemaine is not open about it, that it might be fancied he knows more than he will say. It is so. Perhaps he will not speak because it might implicate some one, Not himself, Ethel ; never himself ; I do not fear that.”

“You know what they are foolish enough to say here,” breathed Ethel. “That the ghost of the Grey Friar, angry at his precincts being invaded——”

“Hush !” reproved Miss Castlemaine.

CHAPTER XII.

MADAME GUISE.

It was the afternoon of this same day. The stage coach, delayed by the snow, was very late when it was heard approaching. Its four well fed horses drew up at the Dolphin Inn, to set down Mr. Nettleby. The superintendent of the coast guard, who had been about some business a mile or two inland, had availed himself of the coach for returning. John Bent and his wife came running to the door. The guard, hoping perhaps for sixpence or a shilling gratuity, descended

from his seat, and was extending a hand to help the officer down from the roof, when he found himself called to a lady inside, who had been reconnoitring the inn, and the flaming dolphin on its sign-board.

"What place is this, guard?"

"Greylands, ma'am."

"That seems a good hotel."

"It is a nice comfortable inn, ma'am."

"I will get out here. Please see to my luggage."

The guard was surprised. He thought the lady must have made a mistake.

"This is not Stilborough, ma'am. You are booked to Stilborough."

"But I will not go on to Stilborough: I will descend here instead. See my poor child—" showing the hot face of a little girl who lay half asleep upon her knee. "She has, I fear, the fever coming on, and she is so fatigued. This is a healthy place; it has the sea, I perceive; and I think she shall rest here for a day or two before going on."

The landlord and his wife had heard this colloquy, for the lady spoke at the open window. They advanced, and the guard threw wide the door.

"Will you carry my little one," said the lady to Mrs. Bent. "I fear she is going to be ill, and I do not care to take her on further. Can I be accommodated with a good apartment here?"

"The best rooms we have, ma'am, are at your service; and you will find them excellent, though I say it that shouldn't," returned Mrs. Bent, receiving the child into her arms.

"Marie fatiguée," called out, in a plaintive voice, the little thing, who seemed about three years old. "Marie ne peut marcher."

The lady reassured her in the same language, and alighted. She was a tall, lady-like young woman of apparently some six-and-twenty years, with a pleasing face that wore signs of care, or weariness; or perhaps both. Mrs. Bent carried the child into the parlour; John followed with a large hand reticule made of plaited black-and-white straw, and the guard put two trunks in the passage.

"I am en voyage," said the lady, addressing Mrs. Bent—and it may be remarked that, though speaking English with fluency, and with very little foreign accent, she now and then substituted a French word, or a whole sentence, as though the latter were more familiar to her in everyday life—and of which John Bent and his wife did not understand a syllable. "But we have voyaged far, and the sea crossing yesterday was rough, and I fear I have brought my little one on too quickly: so it may be well to halt here for a short time and keep her quiet. I hope your hotel is not crowded with company?"

"There's nobody at all staying in it just now, ma'am," said Mrs. Bent. "We don't have many indoor visitors at the winter season."

"And this snow is not good," said the stranger; "I mean not good

for voyagers. I might have put off my journey had I thought it would come. When I left my home, the warm spring sun was shining, the trees were budding."

"We have had fine warm weather here, too," said Mrs. Bent; "it changed again a week ago to winter: not but what we had the sun out bright to-day. This dear little thing seems delicate, ma'am."

"Not generally. But she is fatigued, you see, and has a touch of fever. We must make her some tisane."

"We'll soon get her right again," said Mrs. Bent gently; for with children, of whom she was very fond, she lost all her sharpness. "Poor little lamb! And so you've come from over the water, ma'am!—and the sea was rough!—and did this little one suffer?"

"Oh, pray do not talk of that terrible sea! I thought I must have died. To look at, nothing more beautiful; but to be on it—ah, Ciel!"

She shuddered and shrugged her shoulders with the recollection. There was something peculiarly soft and winning in the quiet tones of her voice; something attractive altogether in her features and their sad expression.

"I never was on the sea, thank goodness," said Mrs. Bent; "I have heard it's very bad. We get plenty of it as far as the looks go: and that's enough for us, ma'am."

She had sat down, the child on her lap, and was taking off its uebl woollen hood and warm woollen pelisse of fleecy grey cloth. The frock underneath was of fine black French merino. The lady wore the same kind of black dress under her cloak: it was evident that both were in mourning. Happening to look up from the semi-sleeping child, Mrs. Bent caught the traveller's eyes fixed attentively upon her, as if studying her face.

"How do you call this village, I was about to ask. Grey——?"

"Greylands, ma'am. Stilborough is about three miles off. Are you going there?"

"Not to stay," said the lady hastily. "I am come to England to see a relative, but my progress is not in any hurry. I must think first of my child: and this air seems good."

"None so good for miles and miles," returned Mrs. Bent. A week of it will make this little lady quite another thing. Pretty thing! What beautiful eyes!"

The child had woke up again in her restlessness; she was gazing up at her strange nurse with wide-open, dark-brown eyes. They were not her mother's eyes, for those were blue. The hot little face was becoming paler.

"I must make her some tisane," repeated the lady; "or show you how to make it. You have herbs, I presume. We had better get her to bed. Nothing will do her so much good as rest and sleep. Will Marie go to bed?" she said, addressing the little girl.

"Oui," replied the child, who appeared to understand English perfectly, but would not speak it. "Marie sommeil," she added in her childish patois. "Marie soif. Maman, donne Marie à boire."

"Will you take her, ma'am, for a few moments?" said Mrs. Bent, placing her in the mother's arms. "I will see after your room and make it ready."

The child, however, feverish and weary, soon began to cry. Her mother hushed her; and presently, not waiting for the reappearance of the landlady, she carried her up stairs.

Which was the chamber, she wondered, on reaching the landing: but the half-open door of one, and some stir within, guided her thoughts to the right. Mrs. Bent was bustling about it, and the landlord, who appeared to have been taking up the trunks, stood just inside the door. Some kind of dispute seemed to be going on, for Mrs. Bent's tones were shrill. The lady halted, not liking to intrude, and sat down on a short bench against the wall; the child, dozing again, was heavy for her.

"As if there was not another room in the house, but you must make ready this one!" John was saying in a voice of vexed remonstrance. "I told you, Dorothy, I'd never have this chamber used again until we had not space left elsewhere. What are you going to do with the things?"

"Now don't you fret yourself to fiddle-strings," retorted Mrs. Bent. "I am putting all the things into this linen-basket; his clothes and his little desk and all, even the square of scented soap he used, for he brought it with him in his portmanteau. They shall go into the small chest in our bed-room, and be locked up. And you may put a seal upon the top of it for safety."

"But I did not wish to have the things disturbed at all," urged John. "The lady might have had another room."

"The tap-room is your concern, the care of the chambers is mine, and I choose her to have this one," said independent Mrs. Bent. "As to keeping the best chamber out of use, just because these things have remained in it unclaimed, is about as daft a notion as ever I heard of. If you don't take care, John, you'll go crazy over Anthony Castlemaine."

The mother outside, waiting, and hushing her child to her, had not been paying much attention: but at the last words she started, and gazed at the door. Her lips parted; her face turned white.

"Peace, wife," said the landlord. "What I say is right."

"Yes, crazy," persisted Mrs. Bent, who rarely dropped an argument of her own accord. "Look at what happened with Miss Ethel Reese to-day? I'm sure you are not in your senses on the subject, John Bent, or you'd never be so imprudent. You may believe Mr. Anthony was murdered by his uncle, but it does not do to proclaim it as if you were the town crier."

Oh, more deadly white than before did these words turn the poor lady who was listening. Her face was as the face of one stricken with terror; her breath came in gasps; she clutched at her child, lest her trembling hands should let it fall. John Bent and his wife came forth, bearing between them the piled up clothes-basket, a small mahogany desk on its top. She let her face drop upon her child's and kept it there, as though she too had fallen asleep.

"Dear me, there's the lady!" cried John.

"And it's unbeknown what *she* has overheard," muttered Mrs. Bent. "I beg your pardon, ma'am, you'll be cold sitting there: had you dropped asleep?"

The lady lifted her white face: fortunately the passage was in twilight: she passed a pocket-handkerchief over her brow as she spoke.

"My little child got so restless that I came up. Is the room ready?"

Letting fall her handle of the basket and leaving her husband to convey it into their chamber as he best could, Mrs. Bent took the child from the speaker's arms and preceded her into the room. A spacious, comfortable chamber, with a fine view over the sea, and a good fire burning up in the grate.

"We were as quick as we could be," said Mrs. Bent, in apology for having kept her guest waiting; "but I had to empty the chamber first of some articles that were in it. I might have given you another room at once, ma'am, for we always keep them in readiness, you see; but this is the largest and has the pleasantest look-out; and I thought if the little girl was to be ill, you'd like it best."

"Articles belonging to a former traveller?" asked the lady, who was kneeling then before her trunk to get out her child's night things.

"Yes, ma'am. A gentleman we had here a few short weeks ago."

"And he has left?"

"Oh yes," replied Mrs. Bent, gently combing back the child's soft brown hair, before she passed the sponge of warm water over her face.

"But why did he not take his things with him?"

"Well, ma'am, he—he left unexpectedly; and so they remained here."

Now, in making this somewhat evasive answer, Mrs. Bent had no particular wish to deceive. But, what with the work she had before her, and what with the fretful child on her knee, it was not exactly the moment for entering on gossip. The disappearance of Anthony Castlemaine was too public and popular a theme in the neighbourhood, for any idea of concealment to be connected with it. The lady, however, thought otherwise, and said no more. Indeed, the child claimed all their attention.

"Marie soif," said she, as they put her into bed. "Maman, Marie soif."

"Thirsty, always thirsty!" repeated the mother in English. "I don't much like it; it bespeaks fever."

"I'll get some milk and water," said Mrs. Bent.

"No, no, not milk," interposed the lady. "Oui, ma chérie! A spoonful or two of sugar and water while mamma, makes the tisane. Madame has herbs, no doubt," she added turning to the landlady. "I could make it soon myself at this good fire if I had a little casserole: a—what you call it?—saucepan."

Mrs. Bent promised the herbs, for she had a store-room full of different kinds, and the saucepan. A little sugared water was given to the child, who lay quiet after drinking it and closed her eyes. Moving noiselessly about the room, the lady happened to go near the window, and her eye caught the moving sea in the distance, on which some bright light yet lingered. Opening the casement window for a moment, she put her head out.

"It is very nice to see; but I don't like to think of being on it," she said as she shut the window. "What is that great building over yonder to the left?"

"It's the Grey Nunnery, ma'am."

"The Grey Nunnery! What, have you a nunnery here in this little place? I had no idea."

"It's not a real nunnery," said Mrs. Bent, as she proceeded to explain what it was, and how good the ladies were who inhabited it. "We heard a bit of news about it this afternoon," she added, her propensity for talking creeping out. "Sister Ann ran over here to borrow a baking dish—for their own came in two in the oven with all the baked apples in it—and said she believed Miss Castlemaine was going to join them as the Lady Superior."

"Miss—who?" cried the stranger quickly.

"Miss Castlemaine. Perhaps ma'am, you may have heard of the Castlemaines of Greylands' Rest. It is close by."

"I do not know them," said the traveller. "Is then a Miss Castlemaine, of Greylands' Rest, the Lady Superior of the Nunnery?"

"Miss Castlemaine, of Stilborough, ma'am. There is no Miss Castlemaine of Greylands' Rest; save a tiresome little chit of twelve. Sister Ann was all cock-a-hoop about it: but I told her the young lady was too beautiful to hide her head under a muslin cap in a nunnery."

"It is a grand old building;" said the traveller, "and must stand out well and nobly on the edge of the cliff. But I cannot see its other end."

"That's nearly in ruins. It's called the Friar's Keep."

"The Friar's Keep! You have odd names here. But I like this village. It is quiet: nobody seems to pass."

"There's hardly anybody to pass, for that matter," cried Mrs. Bent. "Just the fishermen and the Grey Sisters. But here I am talking when

I ought to be doing ! What would you like to have prepared for dinner ma'am ? ”

“ I could not eat—I feel feverish too,” was the answer, given in an accent that had a ring of piteous wail. “ I will take but some tea and a tartine when I have made the tisane.”

Mrs. Bent opened her eyes. “ Tea and a tart, did you say, ma'am ? ”

“ I said—I mean bread-and-butter,” explained the stranger, translating her French word.

“ And—what name—if I may ask, ma'am ? continued Mrs. Bent, as a final question.

“ I am Madame Guise.”

The small saucepan and the herbs came up immediately, brought by Molly, who said she was to stay and help make the stuff, if the lady required her. The lady seemed to be glad of her help, and showed her how to pick the dried leaves from the thicker stalks.

“ Do you have travellers staying here often ? ” asked Madame Guise, standing by Molly and doing her own portion of the work.

“ A'most never in winter, mum,” replied Molly—a round-eyed, red-cheeked, strong-looking damsel, attired in a blue linsey skirt and a cotton handkerchief crossed on her neck. “ We had a gentleman for a week or two at the turn o' January. He had this here same bedroom.”

“ They were his things, doubtless, that your mistress said she was removing to make space for me.”

“ In course they were,” replied Molly. “ Master said he'd not have this room used—that the coats and things should stay in it ; but missis takes her own way. This here stalk, mum—is he too big to go in ? ”

“ That is : we must have only the little ones. What was the gentleman's name, Mollee ? ”

“ He was young Mr. Castlemaine : a foreign gentleman, so to say ; nephew to the one at Greylands' Rest. He came over here to put in his claim to the money and lands.”

“ And where did he go ?—where is he now ? ” questioned Madame Guise, with an eagerness that might have betrayed her painful interest, had the servant's suspicions been on the alert.

“ It's what my master would just give his head to know,” was the answer. “ He went into the Friar's Keep one moonlight night, and never came out on't again.”

“ Never come out of it again ! ” echoed Madame Guise. “ What do you mean ?—How was that ? ”

Bit by bit, Molly revealed the whole story, together with sundry items of the superstition attaching to the Friar's Keep. Madame Guise sat down in a chair, her hands clasped before her, and forgetting the herbs.

Molly saw how pale she looked, and felt prouder than any peacock of her own powers of narration.

"But what became of him?" questioned the poor lady.

"Well, mum, that lies in doubt, you see. Some say he was spirited away by the Grey Monk."

Madame Guise shook her head. "That could not be," she said slowly, and somewhat in hesitation. "I don't like revenants myself—but that could not be."

"And others think," added Molly, dropping her voice, "that he was done away with by his uncle, Mr. Castlemaine. Master do for one."

"Done away with! How?"

"Murdered," said the girl, plunging the herbs into the saucepan of water.

A shudder took Madame Guise from head to foot. Molly looked round at her: she was like one seized with ague.

"I am cold and fatigued with my long journey," she murmured, seeking to afford some plausible excuse to the round-eyed girl. "And it always startles one to hear talk of murder."

"So it do, mum," acquiesced Molly. "I dun'no which is worst to hear tell on, that or ghosts."

"But—this Friar's Keep that you talk of—it may be that he fell from it by accident into the sea."

"Couldn't," shortly corrected Molly. "There ain't no way to fall—no opening. They be biling up beautiful, mum."

"And—was he never—never seen again since that night?" pursued Madame Guise, casting mechanically a glance on the steaming saucepan.

"Never seen nor heard on," protested Molly emphatically. "His clothes and his portmantel and all his other things stayed on here; but he has never come back to 'em."

Madame Guise put her hands on her pallid face, as if to hide the terror there. Molly, her work done, and about to depart, was sweeping the bits of stalks and herbs from the table into her check apron.

"Does the voisinage know all this?" asked Madame Guise, looking up. "Is it talked of openly? May I speak of it to monsieur and madame en bas—to the host and hostess, I would say?"

"Why bless you, mum, yes! There have been nothing else talked of since. Nobody hardly comes in here but what begins upon it."

Molly left with the last words. Madame Guise sat on, she knew not how long, her face buried in her hands, and the tisane was boiled too much. The little girl, soothed perhaps by the murmur of voices, had fallen fast asleep. By and by Mrs. Bent came up, to know when her guest would be ready for tea.

"I am ready now," was the answer. "I will go down stairs with you. And I wish that you and your husband, madame, would allow me to take the meal with you this one evening," added Madame Guise, with

a slight shiver, as they descended the dark staircase. "I feel lonely and fatigued, and in want of companionship."

Mrs. Bent was gratified, rather than otherwise, at the request; and caused the tea-tray, already laid in their room, to be carried into the parlour. The same parlour, as the room above was the same bedroom, that had been occupied by the ill-fated Anthony Castlemaine.

"I hope you are a little less tired than you were when you arrived, madam," said John Bent, bowing, as he with deprecation took his seat at last, and stirred his tea.

"Thank you, I have been forgetting my fatigue in listening to the story of one Mr. Anthony Castlemaine's disappearance," replied Madame Guise, striving to speak with indifference. "The account is curious, and has interested me. Mollee thought you would give me the particulars."

"Oh, he'll do that, madam," put in Mrs. Bent sharply. "There's nothing he likes better than talking of *that*."

But John Bent's account was in substance the same as Molly's. He could tell neither more nor less. The poor lady, hungering after a word of enlightenment that might tend to lessen her dread and horror, listened for it in vain.

"But what explanation can be given of it?" she urged, biting her dry lips to hide their trembling. "People cannot disappear without cause. Are you sure it was Mr. Castlemaine you saw go in at the gate, and to the Friar's Keep?"

"I am as sure of it, ma'am, as I am that this is a tea-cup before me. Mr. Castlemaine denies it, though."

"And you suspect—you suspect that he murdered him! That is a frightful word; I cannot bear to say it. *Meurtre!*" she repeated in her own tongue, with a passing shiver. "*Quelle chose affreuse!* You suspect Mr. Castlemaine, sir, I say?"

John Bent shook his head. The encounter with Ethel had taught him caution. "I don't know, ma'am," he answered; "I can't say. That the young man was killed in some way, I have no doubt of—and I think Mr. Castlemaine must know something about it."

"Are there any places in this—what you call it?—Friar's Keep?—that he could be concealed in? Any dungeons?"

"He's not there, ma'am. The place is open enough for anybody that likes to go in. Mr. Castlemaine had a man over from Stilborough to help him to search, and they went over it together. I and Superintendent Nettleby also went in company; and others went. There wasn't a trace to be seen of young Mr. Anthony, nothing to show that he had been there."

"So it resolves itself into this much," said Madame Guise—"that you saw this Mr. Anthony Castlemaine go into the dark place, on that

February night; and so far as can be ascertained, he never came out again."

"Just that," said John Bent. "I'd give this right hand of mine—lifting it—to know what his fate has been. Something tells me that it will be brought to light."

Madame Guise went up to her room, and sat down there with her heavy burthen of terror and sorrow, wondering what would be the next scene in this strange mystery, and what she herself could best do towards unraveling it. Mrs. Bent, coming in by and by, found her weeping hysterically. Marie woke up at the moment, and they gave her some of the tisane.

"It is the re-action of the cold and long journey, ma'am," pronounced Mrs. Bent, in regard to the tears she had seen. "And perhaps the talking about this unaccountable business has startled you. You will be better after a night's rest."

"Yes, the coach was very cold. I will say good-night to you, and go to bed."

She sank on her knees, when alone, by the side of her child, and buried her face in the white counterpane. There she prayed; prayed earnestly, for help from Above, for strength to bear.

"The good God grant that the enlightenment may be less terrible than are these my fears!"

Back came Mrs. Bent, a wine-glass in her hand. It contained some of her famous cordial—in her opinion a remedy for half the ills under the sun. Madame Guise was then quietly seated by the fire, gazing into it with a far-away look, her hands folded on her lap. She drank the glass of cordial with thanks: though it seemed of no moment what she drank or what she did not drink just then. And little Marie, her cheeks flushed, her rosy lips open sufficiently to show her pretty white teeth, had dropped off to sleep again.

(To be Continued.)

THE FORGET-ME-NOT.

BY JAMES BRITTEN, F.L.S.

AS a general rule it must be admitted that the element of romance enters but very sparingly into the names which we bestow upon plants. There are many which indicate the imagined or real qualities and "virtues" of the herbs to which they are attached; many which refer to the general appearance or place of growth of a plant; but those which have any history about them, apart from these associations, are "few and far between." But in the Forget-me-not we have a pretty title conferred upon an equally pretty flower—a title, too, with a history of its own, which renders it all the more interesting.

What plant, however, was originally known as the forget-me-not it is very difficult to say; although it seems clear that the blue-flowered *Myosotis*, now so-called, is a very recent claimant of the title. According to some old writers, the celebrated Edelweisse of the Swiss was so-called. This plant grows in the most inaccessible parts of the Swiss mountains, and is a favourite love-offering; and tales are not wanting in which we are told how a lover, anxious to obtain the much desired flower for the object of his affections, has missed his footing, and has been found a corpse, with the fated Edelweisse in his hand—a catastrophe curiously resembling that which is traditionally associated with our modern Forget-me-not. It has been stated that a representation of the cinquefoil is found as a mint-mark upon French coins of the fifteenth century, and that this mark was called "*un ne m'oubliez mye*," an old form of the modern French name for the *Myosotis*, "*Ne m'oubliez jamais*." In the "*History of Chivalry*" we are told that a flower called "*Soveigne vous de moy*" was woven upon collars so early as the fourteenth century: but it is not stated what this flower was. Miss Strickland attributes the association of the plant with its present emblematic meaning to Henry of Lancaster, who united it, "at the period of his exile, on his collar of SS., with the initial letter of his mot or watchword, '*Souveigne vous de moy*;' thus rendering it the flower of remembrance. It was with his hostess, at that time wife of the Duke of Bretagne, that Henry exchanged this token of goodwill and remembrance." The "*floure of souvenance*" is, indeed, frequently spoken of in old books; but here again we are at a loss for evidence by which it may be identified with the *Myosotis*.

A yet more fatal blow to the claims of our now esteemed flower is the fact that in none of our older botanical works is this name applied to it. On the contrary, it is given to an insignificant weed of chalky cornfields called in English ground-pine. In this case, however,

there is no romance ; indeed, quite the reverse, as the ground-pine was supposed to be so-called from its unpleasant, bitter taste, which would not be forgotten by one who had tried it.

The pretty little Germander Speedwell, which brightens our hedge-banks with its azure blossoms during the spring and summer months, has also some grounds for being considered a Forget-me-not : by the corresponding name, *Forglemn-mig-icke*, it has long been known in Denmark. Among ourselves it has many pretty names, especially in Devonshire, where it is known as *Angels' eyes*. The flowers, as is well known, fall at a very slight touch ; and to this it seems to owe its name "Speedwell," which was in old times equivalent to "good-bye." The Germans somewhat severely call this plant *Mannertreu*, man's faith, in allusion, it would appear, to human fickleness and instability.

Mr. Baring Gould suggests a very different origin for the name. He connects it with the magic plant which plays a prominent part in many myths, before which the rocks open, and the possessor walks through them until he arrives at an enchanted cavern, filled with gold, silver, and precious stones. He is invited to help himself, with a warning not to forget the best, which he supposes to refer to some specially beautiful gems. These, therefore, he takes, leaving behind him the flower, which exclaims in feeble, piteous tones, "Forget-me-not !" But its little cry is unheeded ; and the rocks, closing upon him, crush him to death, according to one version, or, according to another, bar for ever the entrance. "Thus originated the name of the beautiful little flower. When this story was forgotten, a romantic fable was invented to account for the peculiar appellation."

The popular tradition which tells how the name came to be applied to the plant which now bears it throughout Europe is generally known ; but the present notice would be incomplete without some reference to it. It is said that a knight and a lady were walking by the side of the Danube, interchanging vows of devotion and affection, when the latter saw on the other side of the stream the bright blue flowers of the *Myosotis*, and expressed a desire for them. The knight, eager to gratify her, plunged into the river, and, reaching the opposite bank, gathered a bunch of the flowers. On his return, however, the current proved too strong for him, and after many efforts to reach the land he was borne away. With a last effort he flung the fatal blossoms upon the bank, exclaiming as he did so, "Forget-me-not."

"And the lady fair of the knight so true
Still remembered his hapless lot ;
And she cherished the flower of brilliant hue,
And she braided her hair with the blossoms blue,
And she called it 'Forget-me-not.'"

A GREAT MYSTERY.

WE all went up from Oxford together, and reached the Paddington terminus in a shower of rain late in the afternoon. Miss Deveen's carriage was waiting: she got into it with Tod, and Helen and Anna Whitney. William Whitney and I followed in a cab with the luggage and umbrellas. We reached Miss Deveen's house nearly as soon as the carriage did.

Miss Cattledon, the companion, with her tall, thin figure, her pinched-in waist and her creaking stays, was ready to receive us. Miss Deveen held out her hand.

"How have you been, Jemima? Taking care of yourself, I hope!"

"Quite well, thank you, Miss Deveen; and very glad to see you at home again," returned Cattledon. "This is my niece, Janet Carey."

A slight, small girl, with smooth brown hair and a quiet face that looked as if it had just come out of some wasting illness, was hiding herself behind. Miss Deveen said a few pleasant words of welcome, and took her hand. The girl looked as shy and frightened as though we had all been a pack of gorillas.

"Thank you, ma'am; you are very kind," she said in a great tremble; and her voice, I noticed, was low and pleasant. I like nice voices whether in man or woman.

"It wants but half an hour to dinner-time," said Miss Deveen, untying the strings of her bonnet. "Miss Cattledon, will you show these young friends of ours the rooms you have appropriated to them."

My room and Tod's—two beds in it—was on the second floor; Helen and Anna had the best company room below, near Miss Deveen's; Bill had a little one lower still, half way up the first flight of stairs. Miss Cattledon's room, we found out, was next to ours, and her niece slept with her.

Tod threw himself full length on his counterpane—tired out, he said. Since the affair with old Brandon at Oxford, he seemed to have been less like himself than he was like a dummy, for nobody got a word from him.

"You'll be late, Tod," I said when I was ready.

"Plenty of time, Johnny. I don't suppose I shall keep their dinner waiting."

Miss Deveen stood at the door of the blue room when I went down: that pretty sitting-room, exclusively hers, that I remembered so well. She had on a purple silk gown, with studs of pale yellow topas in its white lace front; studs every whit as beautiful as the emeralds made free with by Sophie Chalk.

"Come in here, Johnny."

She was beginning to talk to me as we stood by the fire, when some one was heard to enter the inner room ; Miss Deveen's bed-chamber, which opened from this room as well as from the landing. She crossed over into it, and I heard Cattledon's voice.

"It is so very kind of you, Miss Deveen, to have allowed me to bring my niece here ! Under the circumstances—with such a cloud upon her—"

"She is quite welcome," interrupted Miss Deveen's voice.

"Yes, I know that ; I know it : and I could not go down without thanking you. I have told Lettice to take some tea up to her while we dine. She can come to the drawing-room afterwards if you have no objection."

"Why can't she dine with us?" asked Miss Deveen.

"Better not," said Cattledon. "She does not expect it ; and with so many at table——"

"Nonsense !" came Miss Deveen's quick, decisive interruption. "Many at table ! There are enough servants to wait on us, and I suppose you have got enough dinner. Go and bring her down."

Miss Deveen came back, holding out her hand to me as she crossed the room. The gong sounded as we went down to the drawing-room. They all came crowding in, Tod last ; and we went in to dinner.

Miss Deveen, with her fresh and handsome face and her snow-white hair, took the head of the table. Cattledon was at the foot, a green velvet ribbon round her genteel throat, and helped the soup. William Whitney sat on Miss Deveen's right, I on her left. Janet Carey sat next to him—which brought her nearly opposite me.

She had an old black silk on, with a white frill at the throat—very poor and plain as contrasted with the light gleaming silks of Helen and Anna. But she had nice eyes, very ; their colour a light hazel, their expression honest and sweet. It was a pity she could not get some colour into her wan face, and some courage into her manner.

After coffee we sat down in the drawing-room to a round game at cards, and then had some music ; Helen playing first. Janet Carey was at the table looking at a view in an album. I went up to her.

Had I caught her staring at some native Indians tarred and feathered, she could not have given a worse jump. It might have been fancy, but I thought her face turned white.

"Did I startle you Miss Carey ? I am very sorry."

"Oh thank you—no. Every one is very kind. The truth is"—pausing a moment—"I knew the place in early life, and was lost in old memories. Past times and events connected with it came back to me. I recognized the place at once, though I was but ten years old when I left it."

"Places do lie on the memory in a singularly vivid manner sometimes. Especially those we have known when young."

"I can recognize every spot in this"—opening the album again
'And I have not seen it for fifteen years."

"Fifteen! I—I understood you to say you were ten years old when you left it."

"So I was. I am twenty-five now."

So much as that! So much older than any of us! I could hardly believe it.

"I should not have taken you for more than seventeen, Miss Carey."

"At seventeen I went out to get my own living," she said, in a sad tone but with a candour that I liked. "That is eight years ago."

Helen's music ceased with a crash. Miss Deveen came up to Janet Carey.

"My dear, I hear you can sing: your aunt tells me so. Will you sing a song to please me?"

She was like a startled fawn: looking here, looking there; and turning white and then red. But she rose at once.

"I will sing if you wish it, ma'am. But my singing is only plain singing: just a few old songs. I have never learnt."

"The old songs are the best," said Miss Deveen. "Can you sing that sweet song of all songs—'Blow, blow, thou wintry wind?'"

She went to the piano, struck the chords quietly, without any flourish or prelude, and began the first note.

Oh the soft, sweet, musical voice that broke upon us! Not a grand powerful voice that astounds the nerves like an electric machine; but one of that intense, thrilling, plaintive harmony which brings a mist to the eye and a throb to the heart. Tod backed against the wall to look at her: Bill, who had taken up the cat, let it drop through his knees.

You might have heard a pin drop when the last words died away: "As friends remembering not." Miss Deveen broke the silence: praising her and telling to go on again. The girl did not seem to have the east notion of refusing: she appeared to have lived under submission. I think Miss Deveen would have liked her to go on for ever.

"The wonder to me is that you can remember the accompaniment to so many songs without your notes," cried Helen Whitney.

"I do not know my notes. I cannot play."

"Not know your notes!"

"I never learnt them. I never learnt music. I just play some few chords by ear that harmonise with the songs. That is why my singing is so poor, so different from other people's. Where I have been living they say it is not worth listening to."

She spoke in a meek, deprecating manner. I had heard of self-depreciation: this was an instance of it. Janet Carey was one of the humble ones.

Good Friday. We went to church under lowering clouds, and came home again to luncheon. Cattledon's face was all vinegar.

"There's that woman down stairs again!—that Dess!" she exclaimed with acrimony. "Making herself at home with the servants!"

"I'm glad to hear it," smiled Miss Deveen. "She'll get some dinner, poor thing."

Cattledon sniffed. "It's not a month since she was here before."

"And I'm sure if she came every week she'd be welcome to a bit and a sup," spoke Miss Deveen. "Ah now, young ladies," she went on in a joking tone, "if you wanted your fortunes told Mrs. Dess is the one to do it."

"Does she tell truth?" asked Helen eagerly.

"Oh very true of course," laughed Miss Deveen. "She'll promise you a rich husband apiece. Dame Dess is a good woman and has had many misfortunes. I have known her through all of them."

"And helped her too," resentfully put in Cattledon.

"But does she *really* tell fortunes?" inquired Helen.

"She thinks she does," laughed Miss Deveen. "She told mine once—many a year ago."

"And did it come true?"

"Well, as far as I remember, she candidly confessed that there was not much to tell—that my life would be prosperous but uneventful."

"I *don't* think, begging your pardon, Miss Deveen, that it is quite a proper subject for young people," struck in Cattledon, drawing up her thin red neck.

"Dear me, no," replied Miss Deveen, still laughing a little. And the subject dropped.

The rain had come on, a regular down pour. We went into the breakfast-room; though why it was called that, I don't know, since breakfast was never taken there. It was a fair sized, square room, built at the back, and gained by a few stairs down from the hall. Somehow people prefer plain rooms to grand ones for every day use: perhaps that was why we all liked this room, for it was plain enough. An old carpet on the floor, chairs covered with tumbled chintz, and always a good blazing fire in the grate. Miss Deveen would go in there to write her business letters—when she had any to write; or to cut out sewing with Cattledon for the housemaids. An old-fashioned secretary stood against the wall, in which receipts and other papers were kept. The French window looked to the garden.

"Pour, pour, pour! It's going to be wet for the rest of the day," said Tod gloomily.

Cattledon came in, equipped for church in a long brown cloak, a pair of clogs in her hand. Did none of us intend to go, she asked. Nobody answered. The weather outside was not tempting.

"You must come, Janet Carey," she said very tartly, angry with us all, I expect. "Go and put on your things."

"No," interposed Miss Deveen. "It would not be prudent for your niece to venture out in this rain, Jemima."

"The church is only over the way."

"But consider the illness she has but just got up from. Let her stay in doors."

Cattledon went off without any more opposition, Janet kneeling down unasked, to put on her clogs, and then opening her umbrella for her in the hall. Janet did not come in again. Miss Deveen went out to sit with a sick neighbour : so we were alone.

"What a cranky old thing that Cattledon is !" cried Bill, throwing down his newspaper. "She'd have walked that sick girl off in the wet, you see."

"How old is Cattledon ?" asked Tod. "Sixty ?"

"Oh, you stupid fellow !" exclaimed Helen, looking up from the stool on the hearth rug, where she was sitting, nursing her knees. "Cattledon sixty ! Why, she can't be above forty-five."

It was disrespectful no doubt, but we all called her plain "Cattledon" behind her back ; putting no handle to her name.

"That's rather a queer girl, that niece," said Tod. "She won't speak to one : she's like a frightened hare."

"I like her," said Anna. "I feel very sorry for her. She gives one the idea of having been always put upon ; and she looks dreadfully ill."

"I should say she has been kept in some Blue Beard's cupboard, amid a lot of hanging wives, and they've permanently scared her," remarked Bill.

"It's Cattledon," said Tod. "It's not the wives. She puts upon the girl and frightens her senses out of her. Cattledon's a cross-grained, two-edged——"

He had to shut up : Janet Carey was coming in again. For about five minutes nobody spoke. There seemed to be nothing to say. Bill played at ball with Miss Deveen's red pen wiper : Anna began turning over the periodicals : Helen gave the cat a box when it would have jumped on her knee.

"Well, this is lively !" cried Tod. "Nothing on earth to do ; I wonder why the rain couldn't have kept off till to-morrow ?"

"I say," whispered Helen, treason sparkling from her bright eyes, "let us have up that old fortune-teller. I'll go and ask Lettice."

She whisked out of the room, shutting the tail of her black silk dress in the door-way, and called Lettice. A few minutes, and Mrs. Ness came in, courtesying. A stout old lady in a cotton shawl and broad-bordered cap with a big red bow tied in front of it.

"I say, Mrs. Ness, can you tell our fortunes ?" cried Bill.

"Bless you, young gentlefolks, I've told a many in my time. I'll tell yours, if you like to bid me, sir."

"Do the cards tell true ?"

"I b'lieve they does, sir. I've knowed 'em to tell over true now and again—more's the pity!"

"Why do you say more's the pity?" asked Anna.

"When they've foretelled bad things, my sweet, pretty young lady. Death, and what not."

"But how it must frighten the people who are having them told!" cried Anna.

"Well, to speak the truth, young gentlefolks, when its very bad, I generally softens it over to 'em—says the cards is cloudy, or some'at o' that," was the old woman's candid answer. "It don't do to make folks uneasy."

"Look here," said Helen, who had been to find the cards, "I should not like to hear it if its anything bad."

"Ah, my dear young lady, I don't think *you* need fear any but a good fortune, with that handsome face and them bright eyes of yours," returned the old dame—who really seemed to speak, not in assumed flattery but from the bottom of her heart. "I don't know what the young lords 'ud be about, to pass *you* by."

Helen liked that; she was just as vain as a peacock, and thought no end of herself. "Who'll begin?" asked she.

"Begin yourself, Helen," said Tod. "It's sure to be something good."

So she shuffled and cut the cards as directed: and the old woman, sitting at the table, spread them out before her, talking a little bit to herself, and pointing with her finger here and there.

"You've been upon a journey lately," she said, "and you'll soon be going on another. You'll have a present before many days is gone; and you'll—stay, there's that black card—you'll hear of somebody that's sick. And—dear me! there's an offer for you—an offer of marriage,—but it won't come to anything. Well now, shuffle and cut 'em again, please."

Helen did so. This was repeated three times in all. But, so far as we could understand it, her future seemed to be very uneventful—to have nothing in it—something like Miss Deveen's.

"It's a brave fortune, as I thought, young lady," cried Mrs. Ness. "No trouble or care in store for you."

"But there's *nothing*," said Helen, too intently earnest to mind any of us. "When am I to be married?"

"Well, my dear, the cards haven't told so much this time. There'll be an offer, as I said—and I think a bit of trouble over it; but—"

"But you said it would not come to anything," interrupted Helen.

"Well, and no more it won't: leastways, it seemed so by the cards; and it seemed to bring a bother with it—old folks pulling one way maybe, and young 'uns t'other. You'll have to wait a bit for the right gentleman, my pretty miss."

"What stupid cards they are!" cried Helen, in dudgeon. "I dare say it's all rubbish."

"Any ways, you've had nothing bad," said the old woman. "And that's a priceless consolation."

"Its your turn now, Anna."

"I won't have mine told," said Anna. "I'm afraid."

"Oh, you senseless donkey!" cried Bill. "Afraid of a pack of cards!" So Anna laughed, and began.

"Ah, there's more here," said the old woman as she laid them out. "You are going through some great ceremony not long first. See here—crowds of people—and show. Is it a great ball, I wonder?"

"It may be my presentation," said Anna.

"And here's the wedding-ring!—and there's the gentleman! See! he's turning towards you: a dark man it is: and he'll be very fond of you, too!—and——"

"Oh, don't go on," cried out Anna, in dreadful confusion as she heard all this, and caught Tod's eye, and Bill on the broad laugh. "Don't, pray don't; it must be all nonsense," she went on, blushing redder than a stormy sunset.

"But its true," steadily urged the old lady. "There the wedding is. I don't say it'll be soon; perhaps not for some years; but, come it will in its time. And you'll live in a fine big house; and—stay a bit—there'll——"

Anna, half laughing, half crying, and her face hotter than Dame Ness's fiery bow, pushed the cards together. "I won't be told any more," she said: "it's all a pack of nonsense."

"Of course it is," added Helen decisively. "And why couldn't you have told me all that, Mrs. Ness?"

"Why, my dear, sweet young lady, it isn't me that tells; it's the cards."

"I don't believe it. But it does to while away a wet and wretched afternoon. Now, Miss Carey."

Miss Carey looked off her book with a start. "Oh, not me! Please, not me!"

"Not you!—the idea!" cried Helen. "Why, of course you must. I and my sister have had our turn, and you must take yours."

As if further objection was out of the question, Miss Carey stood up by the table and shuffled the cards that Dame Ness handed to her. When they were spread out, the old woman looked at the cards longer than she had looked for either Helen or Anna, then at the girl, then at the cards again.

"There has been sickness;—and trouble;—and distress," she said at length. "And—and—'tain't over yet. I see a dark lady and a fair man: they've been in it, somehow. Seems to ha' been a great big trouble—" putting the tips of her forefingers upon two cards. "Here you are, you

see, right among it,"—pointing to the Queen of Hearts. "I don't like the look of it. And there's money mixed up in the sorrow——"

A low, shuddering cry. I happened to be looking from the window at the moment, and turned to see Janet Carey with hands uplifted and a face of imploring terror. The cry came from her.

"Oh don't, don't ! don't tell any more !" she implored. "I—was—not—guilty."

Down went her voice by little and little, down fell her hands ; and down dropped she on the chair behind her. The next moment she was crying and sobbing. We stood round like so many helpless simpletons, quite put down by this unexpected interlude. Old Dame Ness stared, slowly shuffling the cards from hand to hand, and could not make it out.

"Here, I'll have my fortune told next, Mother Ness," said Bill Whitney, really out of good nature to the girl, that she might be left unobserved to recover herself. "Mind you promise me a good one."

"And so I will then, young gentleman, if the cards 'll let me," was the hearty answer. "Please then to shuffle 'em well, sir, and then cut 'em into three."

Bill was shuffling with all his might when we heard the front door open, and Cattledon's voice in the hall. "Oh, by George, I say, what's to be done?" cried he. "She'll be fit to choke us. That old parson can't have given them a sermon."

Fortunately she stayed on the door-mat to take off her clogs. Dame Ness was scuffled down the kitchen stairs, and Bill hid the cards away in his pocket.

And until then it had not occurred to us that it might not be quite the right thing to go in for fortune-telling on Good Friday.

On Easter Tuesday William Whitney and Tod went off to Whitney Hall for a few days : Sir John wrote for them. In the afternoon Miss Deveen took Helen in the carriage to make calls ; and the rest of us went to the Colosseum, in the Regent's Park. Cattledon rather fought against the expedition, but Miss Deveen did not listen to her. None of us—except herself—had seen it before : and I know that I, for one, was delighted with it.

The last performance was over : if I remember aright, at this distance of time, it was the representation of the falling of an avalanche on a Swiss village, to bury it for ever in the snow ; and we saw the little lighted church to which the terrified inhabitants were flying for succour, and heard the tinkling of its alarm bell. As we pushed out with the crowd, a policeman appeared in our way, facing us, a tall, big fierce-looking man ; not to impede the advance, but to direct its movements. Janet Carey seized hold of my arm, and I turned to look at her. She stood something like a block of stone ; her face white with

terror, her eyes fixed on the policeman. I could not get her on, and we were stopping those behind. Naturally the man's eyes fell on her; and with evident recognition.

"Oh it's you here, is it, Miss Carey!"

The tone was not exactly insolent; but it was cool and significant, wanting in respect. When I would have asked him how he dared so to address a young lady, the words were arrested by Janet. I thought she had gone mad.

"Oh, get me away, Mr. Lydlow, for Heaven's sake! Don't let him take me! Oh what shall I do! what shall I do?"

"What you've got to do is to get for'ard out o' this here passage and not block up the way," struck in the policeman. "I bain't after you now; so you've no call to be afeared this time. Pass on that way, sir."

I drew her onwards, and in half a minute we were in the open air, clear of the throng. Cattledon, who seemed to have comprehended nothing, except that we had stopped the way, shook Janet by the arm in a tower of anger, and asked what had come to her.

"It was the same man, aunt, that Mrs. Knox called in," she gasped. "I thought he had come to London to look for me."

Miss Cattledon's answer was to keep hold of her arm, and whirl her along towards the outer gates. Anna and I followed in a fog of wonder.

"What is it all, Johnny?" she whispered.

"Goodness knows, Anna. I——"

Cattledon turned her head, asking me to go on and secure a cab. Janet was helped into it and sat back with her eyes closed, a shiver taking her every now and then.

Janet appeared at dinner, and seemed as well as usual. In the evening Helen tore the skirt of her thin dress: and before she was aware, the girl was kneeling by the side of her chair with a needle and thread, beginning to mend it.

"You are very kind," said Helen heartily, when she saw what Janet was doing.

"Oh no," answered Janet, with an upward, self-depreciatory glance from her nice eyes.

But soon after that, when we were describing to Helen and Miss Deveen the sights at the Colosseum, and the silence of the buried village after the avalanche had fallen, Janet was taken with an ague fit. The very chair shook; it seemed that she must fall out of it. Anna ran to hold her. Miss Deveen got up in consternation.

"That Colosseum has been too much for her: there's nothing so fatiguing as sight-seeing. I did wrong in letting Janet go, as she is still weak from her illness. Perhaps she has taken cold."

Ringling the bell, Miss Deveen told George to make some hot wine-

and water. When it was brought, she made Janet drink it, and sent her up-stairs to bed, marshalled by Cattledon.

The next morning, Wednesday, I was dressing in the sunshine that streamed in at the bedroom windows, when a loud hullabaloo was set up below, enough to startle the king and all his men.

"Thieves ! robbers ! murder !"

Dashing to the door, I looked over the balustrades. The shrieks and calls came from Lettice Lane, who was stumbling up the stairs from the hall. Cattledon opened her door in her nightcap, saw me, and shut it again with a bang.

"Murder ! robbers ! thieves !" shrieked Lettice.

"But what is it, Lettice ?" I cried, leaping down.

"Oh Mr Johnny the house is robbed !—and we might just as well all have been murdered in our beds !"

Everybody was appearing on the scene. Miss Deveen came fully dressed—she was often up before other people ; Cattledon arrived in a white petticoat and shawl. The servants were running up from the kitchen.

Thieves had broken in during the night. The (so-called) breakfast room at the back presented a scene of indescribable confusion. Every thing in it was turned topsy-turvy. The secretary had been ransacked ; the glass doors stood open to the garden.

It seemed that Lettice, in pursuance of her morning's duties, had gone to the room, and found it in this state. Lettice was of the excitable order, and went into shrieks. She stood now, sobbing and shaking, as she gave her explanation.

"When I opened the door and saw it ; the room in this pickle, the window standing open, my very inside seemed to curdle within me. For all I knew the thieves might have done murder. Just look at the place, ma'am !—look at your secretary !"

It's what we were all looking at. The sight was as good as moving house. Chairs and footstools lay upside down, their chintz covers flung off ; the hearth-rug was under the table ; books were open, periodicals scattered ; two pictures had been taken from the walls and lay face downwards ; every ornament was moved from the mantel piece ; the secretary stood open, all its papers had been taken out, opened, and lay in a heap on the floor ; and Janet Carey's well-stocked work-box was turned bottom upwards, its contents having rolled anywhere.

"This must be your work, George," said Miss Cattledon, turning on the man with a grim frown.

"Mine, ma'am !" he answered amazed at the charge.

"Yes, yours," repeated Cattledon. "You could not have fastened the shutters last night—and that is how the thieves have got in."

"But I did, ma'am. I fastened them just as usual."

"Couldn't be," said Cattledon decisively, who had been making her

way over the débris to examine the shutters. "They have not been forced in any way : they have simply been opened. The window also."

"And neither window nor shutters could be opened from the outside without force," remarked Miss Deveen. "I fear, George, you must have forgotten this room when you shut up last night."

"Indeed, ma'am, I did not forget it," was the respectful answer. "I assure you I bolted the window and barred the shutters as I always do."

Janet Carey, standing in mute wonder like the rest of us, testified to this. "When I came in here last night to get a needle and thread to mend Miss Whitney's dress, I am sure the shutters were shut: I noticed that they were."

Cattledon would not listen. She had taken up her own opinion of George's neglect, and sharply told Janet not to be positive. Janet looked frightfully white and wan this morning, worse than a ghost.

"Oh my goodness!" cried Helen Whitney, appearing on the scene. "If even I saw such a thing!"

"I never did—in all my life," cried Cattledon.

"Have you lost any valuables from the secretary, Miss Deveen?"

"My dear Helen, there were no valuables in the secretary to lose," was Miss Deveen's answer. "Sometimes I keep money in it—a little but last night there happened to be none. Of course the thieves could not know that, and must have been greatly disappointed. If they did not come in through the window—why, they must have got in elsewhere."

Miss Deveen spoke in a dubious tone, that too plainly showed her own doubts on the point. George felt himself and his word reflected upon.

"If I had indeed forgotten this window last night, ma'am—though for me to do such a thing seems next door to impossible—I would confess to it at once. I can be upon my oath, ma'am, if put to it, that I made all secure here at dusk."

"Then, George, you had better look to your other doors and windows," was the reply of his mistress.

The other doors and windows were looked to : but no trace could be found of how the thieves got in. After breakfast, we succeeded in putting the room tolerably straight. The letters and bills took most time, for every one was lying open. And after it was all done, Miss Deveen came to the conclusion that nothing had been taken.

"Their object must have been money," she observed. "It is a good thing I happened to carry my cash-box up-stairs yesterday. Sometimes I leave it here in the secretary."

"And was much in it?" one of us asked.

"Not very much. More, though, than one cares to lose: a little gold and a bank-note."

"A bank-note!" echoed Janet, repeating the words quickly. "Is it safe?—are you sure, ma'am, the note is safe?"

"Well, I conclude it is," answered Miss Deveen with composure. "I saw the cash-box before I came down this morning. I did not look inside it."

"Oh, but you had better look," urged Janet, betraying some excitement. "Suppose it should be gone! Can I look, ma'am?"

"What nonsense!" exclaimed Helen. "If the cash-box is safe, the money must be safe inside it. The thieves did not go into Miss Deveen's room, Janet Carey."

The servants wanted the police called in; but their mistress saw no necessity for it. Nothing had been carried off she said, and therefore she should take no further trouble. Her private opinion was that George, in spite of his assertions, must have forgotten the window.

It seemed a curious thing that the thieves had not visited other rooms. Unless, indeed, the door of this one had been locked on the outside, and they were afraid to risk the noise of forcing it: and no one could tell whether the key had been turned, or not. George had the plate-basket in his bed-chamber; but on the sideboard in the dining-room stood a silver tea-caddy and a small silver waiter: how was it they had not walked off with these two articles? Or, as the cook said, why didn't they rifle her larder? She had various tempting things in it, including a fresh-boiled ham.

"Janet Carey has been sick all the afternoon," observed Anna, when I and Helen got home before dinner, for we had been out with Miss Deveen. "I think she feels frightened about the thieves, for one thing."

"Sick for nothing!" returned Helen slightly. "Why should she be frightened any more than we are? The thieves did not hurt her. I might just as well say I am sick."

"But she has been really sick, Helen. She has a shivering-fit one minute and is sick the next. Cattledon says she must have caught cold yesterday, and is cross with her for catching it."

"Look here," said Helen, dropping her voice. "I can't get it out of my head that that old fortune-teller must have had to do with it. She must have seen the secretary and may have taken note of the window fastenings. I am in a state over it: as you both know, it was I who had her up."

Janet did not come down until after dinner. She was pale and quiet, but not less ready than ever to do what she could for everybody. Helen had brought home some ferns to—transfer, I think she called it. Janet at once offered to help her. The process involved a large washhand-basin full of water, and Miss Deveen sent them to the breakfast-parlour, not to make a mess in the drawing-room.

"Well, my dears," said Miss Deveen, when she had read the Chapter before bed-time, "I hope you will all sleep well to-night, and that we

shall be undisturbed by thieves. Not that they disturbed us last night," she added laughing. "Considering all things, I'm sure they were as polite and considerate thieves as we could wish to have to do with."

Whether the others slept well, I cannot say : I know I did. So well that I never woke at all until the same cries from Lettice disturbed the house as on the previous morning. The thieves had been in again !

Down stairs we got, as quickly as some degree of dressing allowed, and found the breakfast parlour all confusion, the servants all consternation : the window open as before ; the furniture turned about, the ornaments and pictures moved from their places, the books scattered, the papers of the secretary lying unfolded in a heap on the carpet, and a pair of embroidered slippers of Helen Whitney's lying in the wash-hand basin of water.

"What an extraordinary thing !" exclaimed Miss Deveen, while the rest of us stood in mute amazement.

Lettice's tale was the same as the previous one. Upon proceeding to the room to put it to rights, she had found it thus, and its shutters and glass-doors wide open. There was no trace, save here, of the possible entrance or egress of thieves : all other fastenings were secure as they had been left over night ; other rooms had not been disturbed ; and more singular than all, nothing appeared to have been taken. What could the thieves be seeking for ?

"Shall you call in the police now, ma'am ?" asked Cattledon, her tone implying that they ought to have been called in before.

"Yes, I shall," emphatically replied Miss Deveen.

"Oh !" shrieked Helen, darting in, after making a hasty and impromptu toilet, "oh, look at my new slippers !"

After finishing the ferns last night they had neglected to send the basin away. The slippers were rose-coloured, worked with white flowers in floss silk ; and the bits of loose green from the ferns floated over them like green weeds on a pond. Helen had bought them when we were out yesterday.

"My beautiful slippers !" lamented Helen. "I wish to goodness I had not forgotten to take them up-stairs. What wicked thieves they must be ! They ought to be hung."

"It's to know, mum, whether it *was* thieves," spoke the cook.

"Why, what else can it have been, cook ?" asked Miss Deveen.

"Mum, I don't pretend to say. I've knowed cats do queer things. We've got two on 'em—the old cat and her half-grown kitten."

"Did you ever know cats unlock a secretary and take out the papers, cook ?" returned Miss Deveen.

"Well no, mum. But, on the other hand, I never knowed thieves break into a house two nights running, and both times go away empty handed."

That argument was unanswerable. Unless the thieves had been disturbed on each night, how was it they had taken nothing?

Miss Deveen locked the door upon the room just as it was; and after breakfast sent George to the nearest police-station. While he was gone, I was alone in the dining-room, stooping down to hunt for a book in the lowest compartment of the book-case, when Janet Carey came in followed by Cattledon. I suppose the falling table-cover hid me from them, for Cattledon began to blow her up.

"One would think you were a troubled ghost, shaking and shivering in that way, first upstairs and then down! The police coming!—what if they are? They are not coming after you this time. There's no money missing now."

Janet burst into tears. "Oh, aunt, why do you speak so to me? It is just as though you believed me guilty!"

"Don't be a simpleton, Janet," rebuked Cattledon in a softer tone. "If I did not know you were not, and could not be guilty, should I have brought you here under Miss Deveen's roof? What vexes me so much is to see you look as though you were guilty—with your white face, and your hysterics, and your trembling hands and lips. Get a little spirit into yourself, child: the police won't harm you."

Catching up the keys from the table she went out again, leaving Janet sobbing. I stood forward. She started when she saw me, and tried to dry her eyes.

"I am sorry, Miss Carey, that all this bother is affecting you. Why are you so sad?"

"I—have gone through a great deal of trouble;—and been ill," she answered, with hesitation, catching up her sobs.

"Can I do anything for you?—to help you in any way?"

"You are very kind, Mr. Ludlow: you have been kind to me all along. There's nothing any one can do. Sometimes I wish I could die."

"Die!"

"There is so much unhappiness in the world!"

George's voice was heard in the hall with the policeman. Janet vanished. But whether it was through the floor or out at the door, I declare I did not see then, and don't quite know to this day.

I and Cattledon were allowed to assist at the conference between Miss Deveen and the policeman: a dark man with a double chin and stripes on his coat sleeve. After hearing particulars, and examining the room and the mess it was in, he inquired how many servants were kept, and whether Miss Deveen had confidence in them. She told him the number and said she had confidence in all of them.

He went into the kitchen, put what questions he pleased to the servants, looked at the fastenings of the doors generally, examined the outside of the window and walked about the garden. George called

him Mr. Stone—which appeared to be his name. Mr. Stone had nothing of a report to bring Miss Deveen.

"It's one of two things, ma'am," he said. "Either this has been done by somebody in your own house; or else the neighbours are playing you tricks. I can't come to any other conclusion. The case is peculiar, you see, in-so-far as that nothing has been stolen."

"It is very peculiar indeed," returned Miss Deveen.

"I should have said—I should feel inclined to say—that the culprit is some one in the house——"

"It's the most unlikely thing in the world, that it should have been anybody in the house," struck in Miss Deveen, not allowing him to go on. "To suspect any of the young people who are visiting me, would be simply an insult. And my servants would no more play the trick than I or Miss Cattledon would play it."

"Failing indoors then, we must look to the out," said Mr. Stone, after listening patiently. "And that brings up more difficulty, ma'am. For I confess I don't see how they could get the window and shutters opened from the outside, and leave no marks of damage."

"The fact of the window and shutters being wide open each morning, shows how they got out."

"Just so," said Mr. Stone; "but it does not show how they got in. Of course there's the possibility that they managed to secrete themselves in the house beforehand."

"Yesterday I thought that might have been the case," remarked Miss Deveen; "to-day I do not think so. It seems that, after what occurred, my servants were especially cautious to keep their doors and windows not only closed but bolted all day yesterday, quite barring the possibility of any one's stealing in. Except, of course, down the chimneys."

Mr. Stone laughed. "They'd bring a lot of soot with 'em that way."

"And spoil my hearth-rugs. No; that was not the route of entrance."

"Then we come to the question—did one of the servants get up and admit 'em?"

But that would be doubting my servants still, you see. It really seems, Mr. Stone, as though you could not help me."

"Before saying whether I can or I can't, I should be glad, ma'am, to have a conversation with you alone," was the unexpected answer.

So we left him with Miss Deveen. Cattledon's stays appeared to resent it, for they creaked alarmingly in the hall, and her voice was tart.

"Perhaps the man wants to accuse you or me, Mr. Johnny!"

We knew later, after the upshot came, what it was he did want: and I may as well state it at once. Stone had made up his mind to watch that night in the garden; but he wished it kept secret from everybody, except Miss Deveen herself, and he charged her strictly not to mention it. "How will it serve you, if, as you say, they do not come in that way?"

she urged. "But the probability is, they come out that way," he answered. "At any rate, they fling the doors open, and I shall be there to drop upon them."

Janet Carey grew very ill as the day went on. Lettice offered to sit up with her, in case she wanted anything in the night. Janet had just the appearance of somebody worn out.

We went to bed at the usual time, quite unconscious that Mr. Stone had taken up his night watch in the summerhouse at the end of the garden. The nights were very bright just then; the moon only a few days past the full. Nothing came of it: neither the room nor the window was disturbed.

"They scented my watch," remarked the officer next morning to Miss Deveen. "However, ma'am, I don't think it likely you will be troubled again. Seeing you've put it into our hands, they'll not dare to risk further annoyance."

"I suppose not—if they know it," dubiously spoke Miss Deveen.

He shook his head. "They know as much as that, ma'am. Depend upon it, their little game is over."

Mr. Stone was mistaken. On the following morning, the breakfast-room was found by Lettice in exactly the same state of confused turmoil. The furniture dragged about, the ornaments moved from the mantelpiece, the bills and papers, as before. Miss Deveen was very silent over it, and said in the hearing of the servants that she should have to carry the grievance to Scotland Yard.

And I'm sure I thought she set out to do it. The carriage came to the door in the course of the morning. Miss Deveen, who was ready dressed, passed over the others, and asked me to go with her.

"Do you know what I am going to do, Johnny?" she questioned, as George took his place on the box and the fat old coachman gave the word to his horses.

"I think I do, Miss Deveen. We are going to Scotland Yard."

"Not a bit of it, Johnny," she said. "My opinion has come round to Mr. Policeman Stone's—that we must look indoors for the disturber. I have brought you out with me to talk of it. It is a great mystery—for I thought I could have trusted the servants and all the rest of you with my life."

It was a mystery—and no mistake."

"A great mystery," repeated Miss Deveen: "and I want you to help me to unravel it, Johnny. I intend to sit up to-night in the breakfast parlour. But, not being assured of my nerves while watching, all solitary, for thieves, or ghosts, or what not, I wish you to sit up with me."

"Oh, I shall like it, Miss Deveen."

"I have heard of houses being disturbed before in a similar manner," she continued. "There was a story in the old days of the Cock Lane ghost: I think that was something of the same kind, but my memory

is rather cloudy on the point. Other cases I know have been traced to the sudden mania, solely mischievous or otherwise, of some female inmate. I hope it will not turn out to have been Lettice herself."

"Shall I watch without you, Miss Deveen?"

"No no; you will bear me company. We will make our arrangements now, Johnny—for I do not intend that any soul shall know of this; not even Miss Cattledon. You will keep counsel, mind, like the true and loyal knight you are."

The house had gone to rest. In the dark breakfast-room sat Miss Deveen and I, side by side. The fire was dying away and it gave scarcely any light. We sat back against the wall between the fire place and the door, she in one armchair, I in another. The secretary was opposite the fire, the key in the lock as usual; the window, closed and barred, lay to the left, the door to the right, a table in the middle. An outline of the objects was just discernable! in the fading light."

"Do you leave the key in the secretery as a rule, Miss Deveen?" I asked in a whisper.

"Yes. There's nothing in it that anybody would care to look at," she replied in the same cautious tone. "My cash-box is generally there, but that is always locked. But I think we had better not talk, Johnny."

So we sat on in silence. The faint light of the fire died away, and gave place to total darkness. It was weary watching there, hour after hour, each hour seeming like an age. Twelve o'clock struck; one; two! I'd have given something to be at liberty to fall asleep. Just to speak a word to Miss Deveen would be a relief, and I forgot her injunctions.

"Are you thinking of ghosts, Miss Deveen?"

"Just then I was thinking of God, Johnny. How good it is to know that He is with us in the dark as in the light."

Almost with the last word, my ears, younger and quicker than Miss Deveen's, caught the sound of a faint movement outside—as though steps were descending the stairs. I touched Miss Deveen's arm and breathed a caution.

"I hear something. I think it is coming now."

The door softly opened. Some white figure was standing there—as might be seen by the glimmer of light that came in through the fanlight over the hall-door. Who or what it was, we could not gather a notion of. It shut the door behind it, and came slowly gliding along the room on the other side the table, evidently feeling its way as it went, and making for the window. We sat in breathless silence. Miss Deveen had caught my hand and was holding it in hers.

Next the shutters were unfastened and slowly folded back; then the window was unbolted and its doors were flung wide. This let in a flood of moonlight: after the darkness the room seemed brighter than

day. And the white figure doing all this was—Janet Carey in her night gown, her feet bare.

Whether Miss Deveen held my hand the tighter, or I hers, I dare say neither of us could tell. Janet's eyes turned on us, as we sat : and I fully expected her to go into a fit of shrieks.

But no. She took no manner of notice. It was just as though she did not see us there. Steadily, methodically as it seemed, she proceeded to search the room, apparently looking for something. First she took the chintz cover off the nearest chair, and shook it out ; turned over the chair and felt it all over ; a small round stand was served the same ; a blotting-case that happened to lie on the table she carried to the window, knelt down, and examined it on the floor by the moonlight, passing her fingers over its few pages, unfolding a letter that was inside and shaking it out to the air. Then all that was left on the floor, and she turned over another chair, and so went on.

I felt as cold as charity. Was it her ghost that was doing this ? How was it she did not see us sitting there ? Her eyes were open enough to see anything !

Coming to the secretary, she turned the key, and began her search in it. Pulling out one drawer first, she opened every paper it contained, shook them one by one, and let them drop on the floor. As she was commencing at the next drawer, her back towards us, Miss Deveen whispered me.

"We will get away, Johnny. You go on first. No noise, mind."

We got out without being seen or heard. At least, there was no outcry ; no sign to tell we had been. Miss Deveen drew me into the dining-room ; her face, as it caught that glimmer, entering by the fan-light, looked deadly pale.

"I understand it all, Johnny. She is doing it in her sleep."

"In her sleep?"

"Yes. She is unconscious. It was better to come away. As she came round to search in our part of the room, she might have found us, and awoke. That would have been dangerous."

"But, Miss Deveen, what is she searching for?"

"I know. I see it all perfectly. It is for a bank-note."

"But—if she is really asleep, how can she go about the search in that systematic way ? Her eyes are wide open : she seems to examine things as though she *saw*."

"I cannot tell you how it is, Johnny. They do seem to see things, though they are asleep. What's more, when they awake there remains no consciousness of what they have done. This is not the first case of somnambulism I have been an eye-witness to. She throws the window and shutters open to admit the light."

"How can she have the sense to know in her sleep that the opening of them will admit it ?"

"Johnny, though these things *are*, I cannot explain them. Go up to your bed now and get to sleep. As I shall go to mine. You shall know about Janet in the morning. She will take no harm if left alone : she has taken none hitherto."

It was a fact. Janet Carey had done it all in her sleep. And what she had been searching for was a bank-note.

In the place where she had been living as nursery governess, she had contrived to lose a bank-note of value, belonging to her mistress, who accused her of *taking* it. Naturally timid, and her spirit beaten down by circumstances, it had a grave effect upon her. She searched for it incessantly ; day after day, just as we had seen her searching in her sleep ; and then fell into a fever—which was only saved by great care from settling on the brain. When well enough, Miss Cattledon had her removed to London to Miss Deveen's ; but the stigma still clung to her, and the incipient fever seemed still to hover about her. The day William Whitney left, she moved from Miss Cattledon's room to the one he had occupied : and that night, being unrestrained, she went down in her sleep to search. The situation of the room in which the note had been lost was precisely similar to this breakfast-room at Miss Deveen's—in her troubled sleep, poor girl, she must have taken it for the same, and crept down, still asleep, to renew the endless search she had made when awake. The night the policeman was watching in the summer house, Lettice sat up with Janet ; so that night nothing occurred. Lettice said afterwards that she twice got out of bed in her sleep and seemed to be making for the door, but Lettice guided her back to bed again. And so there was the elucidation : and Janet was just as unconscious of what she had done as the bed-post.

A doctor was called in—for the brain-fever, escaped, appeared to be fastening on her in earnest now. He gave it as his opinion that she was no natural sleep-walker, but that the mind's disturbance had so acted on the brain and system, coupled with her fright at meeting the policeman at the Colosseum, as to have induced the result. At any rate, whatever may have caused it, and strange though it was, I have only given facts.

The explanation has been a hurried one from want of space. Perhaps you may hear more of Janet Carey sometime.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

THE BATHS OF GASTEIN

CLOSELY shut in by mountains ; exposed only to the South winds, and these to a very modified degree ; the air of Gastein was more than commonly trying and relaxing. But for the cold nights it would have been almost unbearable. After rain, too, the atmosphere would be refreshing : and rain fell almost daily.

It was a positive luxury to sit out in one of the arbours, after a sharp shower, and note its effects. Then indeed, as the doctor termed it, you breathed the true mountain air ; and had it been always thus, Gastein would more than have held its own in comparison with other European climates. But so great was the amount of evaporation, that in a few hours, even after long, heavy rain, all traces thereof would disappear, both from earth and atmosphere.

If two days passed without it the place became intolerable ; and therefore, as Nature generally is true to herself, rainy days in Gastein were in the predominant. But they must not be compared with the rainy days in England, or thought to be as unpleasant. A shower, perhaps, lasted an hour or two ; then the clouds rolled away from the tops of the mountains, the sun shone forth, the blue sky made glad the heart of man, and in a very little time you could not tell that rain had fallen.

One week's incessant downpour we certainly had, but it was a grand exception. And dull enough and dreary the exception proved. Everybody looked blue and disconsolate. The band took permanent refuge in the wandelbahn, and thundered out Strauss's waltzes, varied by operatic selections. The visitors walked up and down the long room as if their lives depended upon exercise, until the very boards creaked under the weight of the burden. One old lady was wont to turn out in a kind of military cloak, and a nightcap surmounted by an enormous brown hat. She had been to the waters of Carlsbad, for liver or lungs, or the derangement of some other internal organ, and was finishing up with Gastein. In this guise she one day fastened herself upon me, no doubt mistaking an astonished gaze for one of fascination ; and she chattered away, now in German, now in broken English, until the efforts of her victim to preserve gravity were becoming painful. Luckily the doctor came in at the right moment, and released me from the humiliation of an outburst. After this I was prepared for her, and on further acquaintance she proved as good and kindly natured as she appeared eccentric.

It was certainly a dreadfully wet week, and at the end of five days people began to ask each other whether it would ever cease. I hunted

up the library woman and made her look out her brightest and most cheerful novels, which were eagerly devoured, in spite of the doctor's commands that all mental exertion, even the most trifling, should be avoided. But flesh and blood cannot endure beyond certain limits. I had got by heart the colour of every pair of eyes in the place, the cut of every figure ; I believe I could distinguish the sound of each particular footstep, and the exact click with which every man closed the door. I counted every pane of glass, and enjoyed a continual feast of terror in watching the awful and impossible contortions of the man with the



UPPER WATERFALL.

violoncello. It seemed for all the world as if music caused a continual stream of rheumatic pains to flow through his body. When the grand crash terminated in a sudden calm, betraying everybody's voice at a shrill pitch, his chest would heave and the perspiration pour off his face as if it would mock and laugh at the feeble efforts of the streaming elements of the sky. I was wont to pity the man, though he never knew it, and therefore was none the better for it ; and would wonder who supplied him with handkerchiefs, and how many at a time he carried about with him. The rest of the band, too, did its share of swaying and surging, so that every now and then you might have fancied them on board ship pitching and tossing in mid-ocean. But

none came up to the 'cello, as he called his bass, and he certainly contrived to make it conspicuous amidst the chorus of instruments. They were a total of twelve or fourteen men, all married, but their wives did not go about with them, and enjoyed the pleasure of their company for a month twice a year. Thus must they have revelled in a life of perpetual honeymoon: and perhaps—who knows?—were none the less happy in consequence.

Wet weeks always seem as if they would never come to an end, like long lanes without turning. But that wet week at Gastein did at last put forth signs of a break up. It was morning, about twelve o'clock, and the eccentric old lady first made the discovery. For some time she had been intently gazing from one of the windows looking southward, the strings of her nightcap had gradually become violently agitated, as if soft winds were playing at hide-and-seek in her brain and running out at her ears. Suddenly she clasped her hands tragically, in a manner peculiar to her people, and uttered a cry of "Der Himmel! der Himmel!" There was an instant rush towards the spot; then a confused murmur of voices which gradually grew louder; and then it was generally known that a small patch of blue was discernable between and beyond the clouds; just over the mountain called the Barometer.

One antiquated spinster of forty-five, with thin curls and a sharp, red nose, who happened to be seated next to me at the time, brought out a pencil and paper and proceeded to jot down a memorandum for her diary. She was evidently weak-sighted and wrote in such large characters that it was impossible to pass them over.

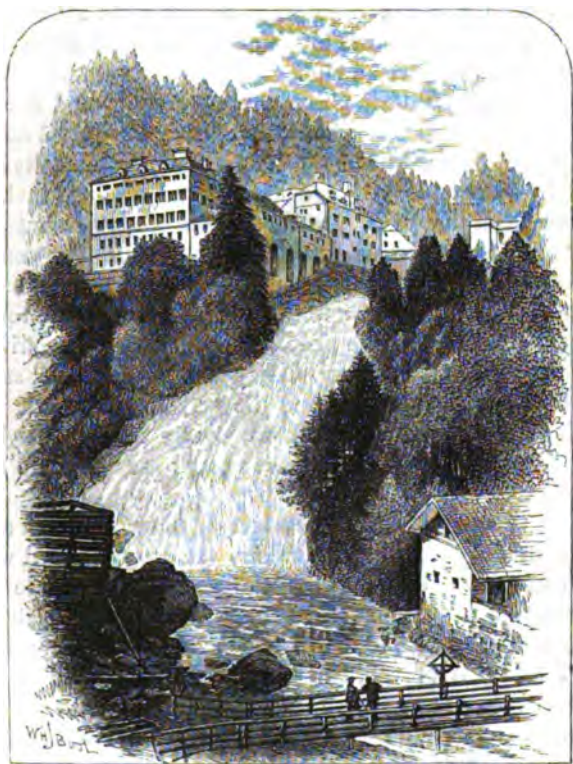
"For the first time for a whole week, a small portion of azure is visible in the celestial firmament. Oh joy! Apparently we may now hope shortly for a cessation of the outpouring of the angry and watery elements of the upper regions. How vividly can I at this moment realize the emotions of Herr and Frau Noah, when, sending forth for the third time the dove from the ark she returned no more."

Then she put back paper and pencil into her pocket, and, inadvertently perhaps, turned upon me a sigh and a gaze expressive of such deep sentimentality, that I was compelled to turn hastily from my seat to avoid a burst of laughter that might not have been in harmony with her own emotions.

But the small portion of azure in the celestial firmament proved no false prophet, no delusive hope. The next morning rose bright and glowing. The roads, hitherto impassable, dried up as by magic; walks were resumed. During this time I had not relaxed in my habit of early rising. No strict monk of the severest order could have more rigidly followed out the rules of his prison-house. And day after day the events to be recorded were the bath, the table d'hôte, and the rain.

Though I seemed to derive but little benefit from the baths, they

were nevertheless enjoyed and looked forward to ; and when after the seventh a day's rest was advised, it created a blank in the quiet life. Subsequent baths were but a repetition of the first. After each one of them there was the same light and buoyant feeling ; nought of languor or relaxation ; no inducement to sleep or heaviness. But the lightness and buoyancy would go off after a time, and leave one, not prostrated, but disinclined for all exertion. This appeared to be the result not of



LOWER WATERFALL.

the baths, but of the warm relaxing air : an influence that everyone cannot battle with.

No doubt it affects people in different ways according to their constitutions or maladies. To those suffering from want of strength or overwork, Gastein will give no immediate relief beyond the relief always yielded by perfect rest. Shut in so closely by mountains there are times when they appear to weigh upon the spirit with strong oppression, and it seems an effort to draw breath. You pant to get beyond and above them ; the eye wearies of its confined vision, and longs once

more for a stretch of country over which it may roam with freedom. Perhaps as a last resource it looks upwards and gazes out into space, but there it has nothing to rest upon; nothing but the dazzling blue, which seems to recede, the more you try to fathom its limits.

In spite of its wild beauty, I caught myself many a time dwelling upon the moment when I should turn my back upon Gastein, and launch out once more into the world. No doubt centuries ago, before it was known as a watering place, the primitive inhabitants of the valley must have thought it the end of creation, if they thought about such things at all. Such it verily appears to be, and is undoubtedly, as far as the globe can be said to have an end.

A mile beyond Wild-bad-Gastein is Böckstein, and here the end comes. It consists of a few houses picturesquely jotted about, and a church, imposing for so small a place: a building of white stone, surmounted by a dome, that if it could take a walk hand in hand down Fleet Street, with that of St. Paul's, the two might pass muster for the extremes of giant and dwarf. It stands out in pleasant contrast with the background of green mountains: one of the latter a mountain of gold that for many years was worked and yielded a rich return. For three months in the year the people of Böckstein are deprived of the sun. On the first of February, Candlemas Eve, they all assemble in church, and at nine o'clock, during the ceremony, the first ray of the sun shoots down through a small window let in at the right spot in the roof for that purpose. This the people are taught to consider a miracle.

The first time I walked to Böckstein I paid the church a visit, and found the interior somewhat glittering; the dome covered with gaudy paintings in which smart colours and a rather indelicate display of legs attracted the attention. On coming out I caught sight of a path by the mountain-side that seemed to promise a pleasant and short cut home. Pleasant it proved, but far from short. It led by the side of the river, which here is extremely narrow and of no depth: and goes rushing over stones and tiny rocks with a loud murmuring sound that gives it the effect of a small troubled sea. The path was a series of rough undulations, and by the time the end was in sight, I found myself knocked up with the unwonted exertion. As fate would have it, I met the doctor close to his villa, who soon discovered that for once his injunctions had been disregarded.

"Wrong," he cried; "very wrong. If you despise my counsels, I will have nothing to do with you."

"I had no idea it was so far," was all I could urge by way of excuse. "The beauty of the day, the attractions of the walk, would lure anyone on insensibly. But the air possesses something fatal to exertion."

"For that reason I forbid it," he replied. "Besides, the baths are trying to the strength, and if you will persist in taxing it during

their progress, you will, as I have said before, leave Gastein worse than you found it. It is now nearly seven o'clock. I recommend you to go in and take a quiet tea."

The quiet tea, to quote the doctor, consisted of a glass of milk, bread, butter, and honey. Nothing more. Tea and coffee he sternly prohibited. To-night as soon as I entered Marie came up with the tray. She was uncommonly fond of coming up upon the slightest pretext; and although apparently always full of work, would at any time desert her kitchens for a quarter of an hour's gossip.

The social distance between masters and servants is not so strictly preserved in Germany as in England. To begin with, the latter as a class are more intelligent; they are better educated; and seldom show any great evidence of unrefinement to shock the senses. They are more poetical and romantic: expressions that may seem out of place, perhaps, in connection with the humbler orders: but it is true to their inborn nature. Again, you may approach them familiarly, and they will not forget themselves, or thrust upon you undue familiarity in return. Marie, the doctor's housekeeper, was a superior woman of her class: a good, motherly kind of face such as one likes to see flitting about a sick-room: a little, gentle woman who trod softly, and did everything with noiseless ease: a woman without angles. We all know how unpleasant angles are in her sex.

Marie had voyaged a little and had a good deal to say concerning all she had seen. She had been to two or three theatres in her lifetime, and after the first one had gone nearly mad with excitement for a whole week. She had spent one season with the doctor at Nice, but the climate proved nearly fatal to her. He practised there every winter, and she remained in Gastein, taking her ease at the villa, or going out for a day's work by way of breaking the monotony. Marie was blessed with what the doctor called an acutely nervous organization, and could always foretell change of weather, especially in the matter of thunder. In this she was better than a barometer.

To-night she came up in her soft list slippers, and having set out the elaborate repast, pretended to be putting the chairs straight, though they were as orderly and proper as if they had not been moved for a hundred years.

"Any news, to-night, Marie?" I asked, by way of encouragement.

"None," she said, abandoning on the spot the unoffending chairs. "Only that some people have been to look at the rooms and did not take them."

The doctor had four sets of rooms, at any one's disposal, but during the whole of our sojourn we had the house to ourselves: a luxury to be obtained only early or late in the season.

"Were you sorry?" said I, selfish enough to be glad on my own score.

"Yes, very," replied Marie. "I like company. An empty house to me is like the grave. When I heard you were coming I danced for joy."

"Yet we might have proved troublesome customers," I remarked; "and worked the flesh off your bones."

"There is but little to work off," she returned, laughing. Which was true. Marie would have made a sorry wife for an alderman. "Besides" she added, "I never think any amount of work a trouble for those who come here."

"Tell me a little of your history," I said. "How long have you been with the doctor?"

"With the Herr doctor! Nineteen years. Though some part of that time was spent with his good mother."

"Nineteen years!—almost half a lifetime. What changes you may have seen. Have you never been married?"

"No," she answered, laughing, and blushing in a shame-faced sort of way.

"How is that?"

"I don't know. We were ten children; six brothers, all married; four girls. But no man ever came for either one of us; never once. I am ashamed to tell of it."

And Marie to conceal her blushes and her shame, with another quiet laugh, fled from the room, and sought refuge in her own kitchen.

Each day now brought in a fresh influx of visitors. Carriages burdened with travellers and luggage, white with dust, would drive up to the hotel, the postboys cracking whips and blowing horns with a heartiness more real than pleasing. Gastein was getting crowded, and the table d'hôte at Straubinger's overflowing. First the long table was filled up; then other tables, one after another, were brought in to the rescue, until at length there was room for no more.

The long table had not changed faces for some time, and it had been a daily source of occupation and amusement to watch the habits and manners of the people during the dinner hour. It is a matter for wonder and perplexity that the Germans, refined and polished in many things, should so many of them be the exact opposite to this in their mode of eating. Few humble village cottages in England but could boast of manners at table as decent as these exhibited: manners, often creating a feeling of disgust over which time and familiarity had no softening influence.

The company at the long table was a motley group, varied enough. At the head, in right of senior visitor, sat a retired hotel-keeper from Vienna, who had come to Gastein for paralysis of the legs. His face was so set that its expression never once changed: not the faintest shadow of a smile ever passed over it; its thin dark features might have been carved in stone. He was wheeled about in a bath chair,

and two or three times a day would walk up and down the wandelbahn for twenty minutes, leaning on the arm of a servant whose face for ugliness might have rivalled the sphinx. The hotel-keeper had evidently retired upon his fortune, and was accompanied by his daughter ; a loud, vulgar girl, who gave herself an unlimited amount of airs, and walked about with a Grecian bend and dressed in the very extreme of fashion.

From his seat, the ex-inn-keeper could be seen down each side the table, with his stern, impenetrable, immovable expression, like a skeleton



INTERIOR OF A COTTAGE.

at a feast. His daughter graced his right hand, but as I happened to be on that side also, some ten seats down, her charms were lost to me. First on the left came a little old man, thin and wiry, with a large, stiff shirt collar, looking for all the world as if he had marched out of one of Dickens's books. I quite warmed towards him for his old-fashioned quaintness, his familiar, English appearance. But he was German to the back-bone ; had never been in England ; and never read Dickens.

Next him sat a tall, lean, cadaverous looking object, conspicuous in a white neckcloth and large diamond studs. He was a Russian count, visiting Gastein for a weakness of the spine. This was not inconceivable, for the first day he rose from table it was startling to behold him : and when at length he stood erect, like a second tower of Babel, he was a full head and shoulders above the tallest man in the room. It would be a feat to record his name from memory which seemed composed of about twenty-four consonants and two vowels. He was reported immensely rich ; and if diamonds are any confirmation of such rumours, he might have been the Emperor of Russia himself. Diamonds flashed in his shirt ; diamonds, emeralds, rubies, blazed on his fingers ; his valet had been heard to affirm that he even wore diamond buckles to his garters : but no one was called upon to put faith in the unseen. The visible was enough.

Next in order came a man remarkably stout ; so that had a contrast been planned, none more perfect or absurd could have been presented. The contrast also, never seemed to become a matter to pass unnoticed, but each day, fresh and green, struck upon the senses of ridicule and mirth. Then came two ladies, mother and daughter, who invariably entered late, with a great amount of state, and a ceremonious crossing of the hands, who walked as if they felt themselves, like Mrs. Hominy, walking up the room to the admiration of all beholders, in a procession of two. The extent of bowing that had to be gone through before they finally composed themselves was a serious interruption to dinner. Then came a fair young man who would have been good looking, but for a look of effeminacy, with whom the younger of the two ladies kept up a daily flirtation. He wore an eyeglass, which he had not the courage to use : and in this respect how happy would it be for some effeminate dandies did they but follow his example. He blushed every time he spoke, and fidgetted with his guard, so that possibly his particular complaint was nervousness. But, like almost everyone else there, in appearance he was the embodiment of health. "The morning he went away, I caught sight of him in a corner of the diligence, which he had all to himself ; and with a polite bow to each other, we parted—perhaps for ever.

Next at the table came an amusing couple : a husband and wife who had turned the hill of life and were quietly and comfortably going downwards. But the lady had not by any means renounced the pomps and vanities of life. Each day saw her in some fresh dress, and set of jewelry : and once or twice when absent from her place, my neighbour whispered to me that her maid must have failed at the last moment in accomplishing some new bit of finery. She was a stout, good-natured dame, with a countenance full and red, giving the impression of too much tightness of gown about the throat ; an effect increased by a pair of eyes not perfectly straight, though sufficiently so not to be unpleasant.

Her husband was thin and strong-looking and it remained an unsolved problem which of the two was the invalid. He talked incessantly to his left hand neighbour, now and then remembering his wife by helping her to wine, or vouchsafing a passing remark.

It would perhaps become tedious to record the peculiarities of the guests as each appeared in turn. Near me sat a small dark man who reminded me continually of one of the composers, though I never could quite make up my mind which of them. Beyond him came the bear and horror of the table : a slovenly attired man with a round head, an apple red, oily complexion, and prominent brown eyes most terribly out of the direct line : a large, sensual mouth, which took in of every dish at least four times the quantity of any one else at the table, although its owner was positively as thin as a skeleton. His mode of eating was too coarse to contemplate ; but in this respect how few set him a worthy example !

Knives and forks were held any fashion. Now five or six pieces of meat would be cut, the knife put down, the fork promoted to single duty. Now the fork would be abandoned, or rested alarmingly in the hand, teeth upwards, and the knife seized upon to do hard work amongst the peas and other vegetables. The plate, cleared and perhaps mopped up with a piece of bread—knife and fork would be thrown into it carelessly, crossed, or at right angles, or with handles where the blades ought to be. Unlike many other places, here most people sent away their knives and forks, and had the felicity of getting some one else's, in exchange, warm, and just wiped through with a towel. Between each course tooth-picks came into use, not for a moment, but during the whole period of waiting. The intervals are not short. The hotel people evidently wished to delude the minds of their guests with ideas of elaboration, and so made up in time what was wanted in dishes. Sitting down at one o'clock, you rose up at half past two. Often after waiting the usual quarter of an hour between each course, a dish would be handed round that more than half the room could not touch ; and to avoid the awkwardness of the pause, and to satisfy the cravings of hunger the majority would break bread and sip wine. Here, if anywhere, to quote an old saying from the Borderland, was it possible to find the grunds o' your stamick, though certainly without being any the better for it.

Vain and delusive was the idea that as visitors increased the dinners would improve. Rather was the progress of a backward tendency. This probably was one reason why Herr Straubinger was as difficult to catch sight of as the Emperor of China : another reason of course being to keep wisely out of the way of complaints. The fortune he is making must be fabulous as that of a Pacha with two tails, or a Mandarin with nine buttons. He holds there somewhat the position of a Despotie monarch, and can make or mar his own laws.

Mutton, to be faithful in small chronicles, was never brought to the table. Whether sheep were scarce or only unpopular was a matter shrouded in mystery ; but during the whole of my wanderings in the Tyrol, the number of sheep seen might easily have been counted on one hand. The poor cows, on the contrary, were numerous and frightfully thin : and kept up so incessant a tintamarre with their crazy, battered-out tin-bells, that nervously inclined persons were driven wild with pity for the unhappy beasts, and excusable rage for themselves.

Absence of all animals was a feature in Gastein. No cat choruses at night : they were almost unknown : and only a very few dogs. These were so frightfully ugly—long, thin, unshapely bodies, shaven of every vestige of hair, the end of the tail, the head, and the paws excepted—that they might have been taken for guardians of some infernal region. It is possible that cats, who are said to be nervous animals, found their health affected by the climate, and the perpetual vapours arising from the waters.

These vapours indeed were bad, not for the cats only, who wisely kept away, but for many human beings who, less wise, do not exercise a like discretion. Many a wife, for example, in good health, accompanying her husband, falls ill during her stay at Gastein. There are numberless people upon whom it acts almost as a poison. Carrying out the idea, it is easy to believe that for others, and in certain specified maladies, it is equally beneficial. The fact of so many falling ill there proves that the place undoubtedly possesses certain powers. The chief reason for this indisposition is that the vapours rising from the baths and hot springs are inhaled : and these, restoring to health those who stand in need of them, have in opposite cases a contrary effect. Those who assert that the Gastein waters contain no special virtue above ordinary waters will find this a strong witness against them.

The amount of evaporation in Gastein is so great that the process is always going on : and when the earth has become dry and parched for want of rain, the springs and waterfalls come in to the rescue. Many a time in the early morning, between five and six o'clock, I have watched the sun drawing up the spray from the waterfall. Gradually ascending, it first became a mist, and then a cloud, which so spread and increased that the whole mountain side was concealed by it. A strange sight, never witnessed elsewhere, perhaps for want of opportunity ; and never seen at a later hour of the day. A sight curious and almost weirdlike, to note the spray change gradually to mist and vapour, and then to the thicker cloud : to watch the process ascending slowly and transforming itself as if under the influence of a wand held by some unseen spirit of the air : increasing from the small rainbow-like streak until it became large enough to envelop the mountain as in a huge white shroud. Then, attracted by the mountains, it would linger lovingly about them, entwining them, as it were, in a fond sisterly

embrace ; whispering to them the close mysterious connection existing between mountain and mist ; between land and water ; between earth and heaven ; in a word between the Creator and the created. Then gradually it would roll and roll away and disperse, and lose itself in the deep blue of the sky, which here seems so high and clear, as to be the very quickening of the word ethereal.

The soul amidst such scenes feels its power ; and with a force they cannot quite possess even amidst the echoing aisles and fretted vaults of a temple, the grand words of the canticle whisper themselves :—

“ Oh, all ye works of the LORD, bless ye the LORD : praise Him and magnify Him for ever !

“ Oh, ye winds of GOD, bless ye the LORD : praise Him and magnify Him for ever !

“ Oh, ye mountains and hills, bless ye the LORD : praise Him and magnify Him for ever !

Though the air of Gastein is not bracing, none can deny its purity. It possesses something that makes itself felt, almost speaking to you in words : something soothing and delicious to the senses ; that stills the nerves and rests the brain ; suspending all powers of exertion, but breathing in an intoxicating sense of life.

“ Could you but go up naked into the woods,” remarked the doctor one day, “ after the bath, and in that state take the air, you would feel life creeping into your veins ; all your muscles hardening, and weakness giving place to strength.”

“ Why, then, don’t you organize something of the sort ? ” I returned. “ Why not have a place set apart for this purpose, where your patients, protected by a linen gown, might receive the benefit of this wonderful air ? ”

“ It would never do,” replied the doctor, shrugging his shoulders and shaking his head. “ We should acquire a reputation for cannibalism ; be called savages ; the world would come down upon us with self-righteous fury. So for the sake of an idea, my patients must renounce one of the best means of restoring them to health. In Gastein it would have a double and treble effect, for the baths open the pores of the skin and render them peculiarly susceptible to all atmospheric influences.”

“ Is this your reason for making your patients lie down after every bath ? ”

“ It is one of them. You then get all the air possible, though in a modified form. Before reaching your room, it has figuratively speaking, passed through a number of strainers ; only that it has become less, and not more, refined by the process.”

“ What other reasons have you ? ”

"Rest, for one thing. Rest to body and mind. Want of rest is the cause of half the existing maladies. Men do too much now-a-days. Those who have work, don't know how or where to stop. Those who have none, but live an idle life, use up their strength in gaiety and dissipation. It is impossible to be moderate in this age. Hence the reason that brain-power is diminishing."

There was a good deal, doubtless, in these views : but the doctor himself was an example of doing too much work rather than too little. He appeared to be in all places at the same time. If you wanted him you had but to take up your station in any part of Gastein, and before five minutes had expired you would certainly catch sight of the coat and yellow umbrella flying round the corner, or darting off at right angles : and then you might fly after him, and take your chance of catching him.

One night he came up to point out from the balcony the effect of the landscape in the light of a full moon. The moon that night was unusually brilliant, the stars bright and flashing, seeming far higher and larger than they appear in our heavier English atmosphere. Here veritably the moon reigned Queen of Night, shedding her gentle beams upon all creation. The sight was indeed a rare one : never to pass out of memory. All the wildness and grandeur of the place was before us softened but not concealed by the pale, silvery light. The mountains stood forth in dense, black masses, their shapes distinctly outlined ; greater and more solemn than under the broad, strong sunshine. Here and there the village houses stood out, small and white. The snow, visible only from the ponderous gold mountain to the right, gleamed and sparkled as if fairies were in possession, preparing for the revels of a midnight banquet. What would it be to be amongst them at this witching hour : to look down upon the world from the great mountain, and watch the play of the moonbeams upon the hundred glaciers ! Here and there the shadows of the slopes were deep, and the woods looked black as Erebus ; so dense and ghostly that each moment you fancied to behold a phantom group come issuing from its shades with noiseless tread and pace sepulchral.

The village lay before us in repose ; a few lights gleaming from windows as sole signal of life. No sound to break the tomb-like stillness but that of the mighty torrent, with its constant, eternal roar : unceasing for centuries past, and for aught we know, for centuries to come. Its white mass of water shone out in the moonlight, and the spray could be seen distinctly ascending, catching the beams upon its numberless particles, and reflecting them in the varied colours of the rainbow. It was a scene of enchantment ; and those who gazed might fancy themselves genii of the night, for no other living sound, no other living beings were evident. The silver thread of the snow ran down the gold mountain until lost by the intervening hill. Here and there

an odd solitary tree stood out upon the summit, stretching forth its branches like some weird, skeleton demon, issuing forth its spells upon a sleeping world. Often as I had gazed upon the scene by day ; much as I had grown to love it ; its effect upon the imagination was as nothing compared with the impression of this moonlit, starlit night.

"How glorious !" one of us exclaimed, after a long silence given to varied emotions. "And yet how unearthly !"

"Glorious indeed !" replied the doctor. "Perhaps because so unearthly. A scene with which I cannot grow familiar ; it strikes upon me always with fresh solemnity. Now you are able to realize the extreme wildness of Gastein. There is scarcely another spot like it in the world."

"I know of none," answered I. "It makes me feel very far out of the world. How Schiller would have revelled in this !"

The remark was called forth by an arbour on the opposite mountain which had been erected years ago and called after the poet. The previous day the doctor had adorned the front of the arbour with a white bust of Schiller : and so strong was the light that we fancied we could just see the white spec gleaming out from its dark background. He had crowned the forehead with a wreath of laurel-leaves brought by him from Italy ; and having some acquaintance with Schiller's daughter, had that day written her an account of what he had done. He pointed out her likeness in his album ; the portrait of a lady who was no longer young but who in youth must have been good and pleasant looking. The expression of her face, adorned by white hair and a calm looking cap, was noble and sedate. She had inherited a little talent from her father, but not sufficient to make her known to the world.

He gave me that evening a photograph of Rückert, received from the poet himself ; who, in the doctor's opinion, possessed one of the greatest imaginations Germany ever produced. On the back of it he wrote one of Rückert's verses, and one of his favourite mottoes ; which the poet had not only written but carried out through life. The face was evidence of the assertion : beautiful with a beauty seen only in such natures.

"Das ist der Zauberbahn, womit Du Alles stillst :
Wolle nur was Du sollst, so kannst Du was Du willst." *

The doctor had known many of the great men of Germany in his time, and amongst them that brightest of bright spirits—Mendelssohn.

We gazed long at the scene before us ; until the moon was high in the heavens, and we chilly with the night air ; then turned into the house, and at once into another world.

The following evening I was seated quietly enjoying tea, and deep in the pages of a book, when suddenly occurred a slight commotion in

* "This is the magical spell, with which you all may still :
Only will what you ought, and you may do what you will."

the passage outside. Then the door was stealthily unlatched, and sounds of an unknown music vibrated through the room. Listening for a moment I tried to recognize the instrument, but in vain. It was neither like the violin nor the harp, and yet somewhat resembled both. At last I thought of the zither, of which I had heard so much : the instrument of the Tyrolese peasantry which they handle with so much effect. I went to the door and there sat Sebastian, the houseman, as he was called, his face a broad ripple of smiles, his zither before him on a table.

He was doing his best to draw forth sweet sounds from the strings but the instrument was old and crazy and had been untouched for years. Sebastian was a fine type of the peasantry ; a handsome, well made man, with iron-grey hair, and a sparkle still in his eye. In his younger days he had been expert with the instrument ; foremost in the dance ; but, as he said, he and his zither had alike grown old : they had had their day : his fingers were stiff and the strings rotten. But he had heard that I was fond of music, and with that kindly spirit so innate in the Tyrolese, had plucked up his courage, and drawn forth his zither from its long abode—its many years' tomb.

He tried to play out a few airs, and some of the dances still lurking since the days of his youth, when he was chief amongst them ; and managed to give an idea of what the instrument in skilled hands would be capable of producing. Every tune had its story. His stock exhausted he jumped up, and with a shake of the head at his zither, and a mutter that it was time he and his instrument were out of the way, he abruptly disappeared.

Later on I obtained a better idea of the capabilities of the zither. I was speaking about it one morning to the doctor, and asking his opinion of the instrument.

"The zither !" he replied : "there is but one opinion about it. If you want to be scientific, go to Beethoven : but if you are seeking music to touch the heart and draw tears from the eyes, listen to the zither."

"Can so simple an instrument do this ?" I asked.

"Yes ; by virtue of its simplicity. The most simple things come nearest home to us. There is a watchmaker lives in Gastein during the season : to hear him play the zither is a treat to be remembered. I will get him to come in some evening."

By reason of which a few nights further on about eight o'clock, a small ceremonious tap at the door ushered in the "Zitherman." He bowed profoundly on first appearing, and again in the middle of the room, with an amount of dignity that would have graced a court. He was tall, good-looking, and superior to his station : a mind well cultivated : had read much, and was evidently of a romantic turn. But it was impossible to determine whether he was perfectly unconscious of self, or inordinately vain or conceited.

Having thoroughly ascertained that he was not intruding, he sat down and placed his instrument before him. Then he began to play and with the first notes poor Sebastian's attempt passed out of memory. The doctor had not overrated its heart-touching powers. The melody was exquisite. The clockmaker had a good deal of expression in him : his nature was refined, and he threw it into his playing. That he loved music was evident. His occupation, too, had probably caused his fingers to be sensitive and delicate of touch. He played many airs, mingling the grave with the gay ; but throughout his face was immovable. It was strangely pleasant to sit and listen to him, and what the doctor called his unscientific music. The Tyrolese airs came out in perfection and with this at their command, their universal love for the art is easily interpreted.

An hour passed quickly under the magic influence. Then the watchmaker got up, and with two more elaborate bows, departed. Several nights after that, when time permitted, he came in and whiled away the moments with his soft sweet melodies.



ARCHIBALD LESTER'S ADVERTISEMENT

BY ANNE BRALE, AUTHOR OF "A WEEK'S ROMANCE."

ARCHIBALD Lester sat before his mother's davenport, with an elaborate display of writing materials beneath his eyes, and a perplexed expression within them. These eyes were small, twinkling, shy, shrewd, greyish balls, set in a fair, unwhiskered face: and the nose and mouth below them were almost as shrewd as they. The perplexity appeared to extend to his neck, for he held it uncomfortably on the side, and looked very much like a bullfinch preparing to sing. Indeed, during his school-days, which, happily, were not numerous, he had received the appellation of Bully—not from his hectoring propensities, but from this one-sided proclivity.

As he sat, his pen between his finger and thumb, and his eyes, upturned, as if in contemplation of a fly on the green and gold paper, he might almost have been pronounced as lost "in maiden meditation fancy free," for his face was smooth as a girl's, and he had never been in love. Yet he was fast verging on forty. The fact was that hitherto his affections had been centred in his mother. She had been so devoted to him that he had found no other woman indispensable to him. But he had lost her, and began to wonder what sort of thing a wife would be. It was this consideration which caused his perplexity.

In spite of nickname and neck, Archibald was not a bad fellow. He had plodded diligently through clerkhood to merchanthood; was liked by his male friends, and had been a dutiful son. It was not his fault, and possibly not his misfortune, that he had never been in love.

At last he dashed into a sheet of note-paper, and having written a few lines, in a round, clear hand, tore it up. He began again, tore up another and another, till some half-dozen were confided to the waste paper basket. He finally condensed his ideas into three lines, which he read and re-read meditatively, then muttered:

"If I like her, I can marry her."

What he had written was as follows. "Wanted. A sensible lady housekeeper about thirty, by a gentleman not far from that age. Money no object. Address A. L. Post Office, Cornhill, E.C."

He went from his fine house in Bedford Square to the *Times* office, and left his advertisement; thence to the Post Office indicated and requested all answers to be sent to his offices in the City.

He knew these would be numerous, but had not imagined they would come in shoals. He filled a portmanteau with them, and took them to Bedford Square. Having primed himself with a good dinner,

he turned them out on the dining-room table, muttering, "Are there so many women about thirty in the world? One can't marry them all."

The letters were specimens of every kind of composition and caligraphy. Some were well, some ill written: some correctly, some incorrectly spelt: some long, some short. Many contained minute descriptions of the personal charms and mental qualifications of the writers, and of these, not a few enshrined photographs, which the overwhelmed Archibald examined with a chuckle of satisfaction, never having ventured to look so closely at a woman before. Others concluded with an entreaty for an interview or reply. "Impossible!" he said, aghast at the idea. "I will insert an advertisement of 'Suited,' when I have made up my mind."

But how could he make up his mind? He would fix on the prettiest photograph? No: beauty was but skin-deep. The best handwriting? The spelling was bad. The most elegant composition? The writing was illegible. The longest letter? Oh dear no! his mother had written briefly and to the purpose. This decided him. He would answer the shortest. He picked it out from amongst the rest. It was as follows. "Mrs Moreton begs to apply for A. L.'s situation. Myrtle Cottage, Martinsborough."

"A widow. Well, a widow might be best, for she would know what to say, which he did not." He set this laconic epistle aside with the photographs, and gathering together the other letters, he piled them up in and beneath the empty grate. Then he struck a light and kindled a funeral pyre.

Four gas-burners blazed down upon him as he again set to his task. Consuming more paper and ink, than was necessary, as most people do, he produced the following line. "A. L. will be at Myrtle Cottage, Friday, at 5 P.M."

Before Friday came, Archibald wished the female sex extinct, for he had never slept so badly in his life as since the letters, and had seen nothing but visions of women in flames, with papers in their hands.

Nevertheless, he dressed himself carefully that morning, and started early. He reached Martinsborough at the appointed time, and found Myrtle Cottage easily. It was a small, rickety house, and he looked in vain for myrtles. The garden was, however, full of autumnal flowers.

He was asked to walk in at once, and the person who opened the door and requested him to be seated remained in the small room into which he was shown. It was Mrs. Moreton. He could hardly speak or look at her, and had never felt so shy before. She stood a few moments, awaiting his words, but hearing none, sat down and looked at him. After a short silence, she began the conversation in a low voice.

"You are A. L., I presume, sir?"

"Yes."

"You advertised for a housekeeper. I am the Mrs. Moreton who answered your advertisement."

"Oh, indeed! I suppose so."

"I would go for a very small salary, if I might have my little girl with me."

"To be sure—to be sure. Half a dozen, if you like."

There was a silence as in a Quakers' meeting. She was considering him with a nervous twitching of her features, while he was looking at his hat and stick.

"I can give no references, but I would do my best," she continued, at last.

"The best is always good enough for me," he said, darting up a twinkling glance, and letting down his lids again.

What did he think of her? He thought she looked old for thirty, but so must he as he was nearly forty. Yet he was not displeased with what he saw. She was a gentle, ladylike-looking woman, with pale face, soft grey eyes, and pensive mouth. But then she had perfectly grey hair! He knew that men worried their brains until their hair turned grey before its time, but he had not remarked this sign of a fast age in women. Indeed, he knew little of the sex. She was dressed in faded grey silk, and had faded ribbons on her head. Her hands were tightly clasped on her lap, and they were very white. Archibald thought she seemed as frightened as himself, and wondered what sort of wife she would make. He continued to stammer out the words "I advertised—in short I advertised for——" but could get no further. She assented mildly and waited hopelessly. At last, she took courage to say, that she believed she could give him satisfaction, for she had been accustomed to superintend an establishment, and was willing to take any position he desired. He thought this was to the point, and wondered whether she would propose for him. If so, should he accept her? He certainly wanted a wife and not a housekeeper, yet he could not exactly assure himself that he had fallen in love at first sight, as he somehow expected to do. At last he said boldly,

"Madam, I advertised for—as you are a widow, you should understand."

"Sir, I am not a widow. I trust my husband is alive."

"Oh, indeed!"

Archibald was much relieved, for he had not calculated on the difficulty of the work he had intended to perform. He grew more at his ease, and by degrees confided to Mrs. Moreton, that having lost his mother, he really had wanted a wife. That lady said, rather indignantly, "Then you should not have advertised for a housekeeper, sir. It is a sad disappointment to me."

Conscious of wrong-doing, Archibald requested permission to reconsider the matter and it was agreed that he should return to Martins-

borough, sleep there, and call on Mrs. Moreton again the following afternoon. They both spent half the night in consideration, and came to the same conclusion: that it was a wife and not a housekeeper that he wanted.

He returned punctually the following day, and as he walked through the rickety gate, and up the little garden, he saw a lady and a little girl in white, digging at a flower-bed. They did not appear to notice him, so he ventured to look at them. He remarked little but the white dresses, and a couple of broad, shabby straw-hats.

Mrs. Moreton was almost less at her ease than she had been the previous day. Neither she nor Lester could resolve about the housekeeper, They sat opposite one another, and talked over the matter, but could come to no decision. At last a ringing child's laugh echoed from the garden, and a clear voice exclaimed, "You naughty Poppy!" Mrs. Moreton jumped up, and looked out of the window.

"It is my little girl and my sister, sir. Edith! Poppy! I want you."

In came a bright, handsome, dark-eyed young lady of may-be five and twenty, with a fresh rose in her dress; and a laughing, blue-eyed beauty of five, with a very dirty frock. What a picture for a Cælebs in search of a wife! They started at the sight of a stranger, and he bowed awkwardly.

Mrs. Moreton had only told her sister that A. L. could not make up his mind, and was to call again. She had been busy with plans, and having a headache, or feigning one, had asked Edith to keep Poppy employed in the garden. Women are wonderfully diplomatic.

"Is it A. L.?" whispered Edith, for Mrs. Moreton had not asked Archibald his name.

"Yes," he said courageously. "My name is Lester."

"Mr. Lester will stay and take some tea, Edith," said Mrs. Moreton. "Will you make it?"

He declined, apologised, and was overruled; and Edith and Poppy disappeared. Mrs. Moreton employed the interval in eloquent praises of her sister.

Archibald was scarcely conscious that the tea was poor, the milk blue, the butter well scraped on the bread. He only saw a large vase of roses on the table; and presiding at the tea-tray one of the loveliest women in the world. If she would but become his wife! what a happy life they might lead together! What an adornment she would be to his home! What a bright sunbeam to its now silent, cheerless rooms! He was a poet at heart, and throughout the meal the words of another and better known poet kept ringing through his brain:—"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever." Mrs. Moreton would now and then glance from him to Edith; but the one was generally looking into his tea-cup, and the other at Poppy, whose large eyes and dimpled mouth were widely opened on the guest.

"Poppy," whispered Edith, "don't stare so; it's not polite."

"I must, auntie, the gentleman is so funny," retorted Poppy. "Why doesn't he talk more?"

Edith pulled her long curls gently, and glanced gravely at Poppy, who only laughed. Archibald looked up, and saw the by-play. What a good, frank face Edith had, and how prettily she shook her head at the child.

"You must forgive Poppy, Mr. Lester," said Mrs. Moreton. "She is so young and sees so few strangers."

"I suppose so," ejaculated Archibald, and Poppy laughed more merrily than ever, while Edith tried to frown her down.

"Poppy," said Mrs. Moreton, "you are not a good girl and must leave the room." And the child began to cry.

"No, no! come here, Poppy, said Archibald, rousing himself with an effort and taking half a crown from his pocket. "For sweeties, you know."

Poppy's tears were dried in an instant, and she ran for the half-crown, which she seized and carried to her aunt Edith. Putting her arms round her neck, she whispered audibly enough for Archibald to hear, "Now you can buy Mammy's medicine." Archibald looked up in earnest, and saw that Edith's face had turned crimson, and that tears were in Mrs. Moreton's eyes.

"You have not thanked Mr. Lester, Poppy," said Edith, disengaging herself from the child.

Poppy's arms were round Archibald's neck so suddenly that he was surprised into straightening it. He blushed as deeply as Edith had done.

"Have you got another?" whispered Poppy, to the annoyance of her elders.

His ready hand was in his pocket, but Edith rose hastily and took Poppy from the room. Mrs. Moreton apologised for her child, and Lester said, "Not at all, not at all." He sat some time in silence, watching the door, but they did not reappear. At last he said,

"I suppose your sister's not also a widow?"

Mrs. Moreton suppressed a smile as she answered in the negative. Archibald began to discover what love at first sight really meant; he had never been so much attracted by a young lady before.

"What a charming wife she would make!" he said. "Do you think ——" He paused. He was about to add, "she would have me on so short an acquaintance?" but he felt the question would not come out. He dreaded the answer.

Mrs. Moreton jumped at the expressed portion of it, and stumbling much in her reply, gave him to understand that she did not know, but she would ask her. "By no means," he said; but still craved permission to call again. As soon as he was gone, Edith came back.

"Have you got the situation?" she asked eagerly. "No! then what shall we do?"

"Dear Edith, I don't think I should suit him; but you might. It strikes me he wants a wife more than a housekeeper, and he seems a nice, amiable man."

"Well," cried Edith, flushing with pain and vexation, "I did not think you would barter me for bread! If I am to be sold let me go into a market where I may have a chance of a better husband than that. I will work for you and Poppy, but I will never be married for you."

"Oh, Edith, don't be cruel. You know you said the other day you would marry a chimney-sweep, if only you could get enough to eat! I am thinking of you and not myself; for now that we have spent all your money, I cannot bear that you should want. Perhaps, this Mr. Lester may be a good, generous man, Edith. He seems so to me. Suppose he were to take a fancy to you."

"I certainly should never take a fancy to him: we have scarcely spoken to one another, and, as it appears that he has made a fool of himself—and you too apparently—I see no reason why we should give him another moment's thought. I wish you would be a little more matter-of-fact and less imaginative: though to be sure it is matter-of-fact enough to marry a man simply because he happens to be rich."

While Edith was thus giving vent to her indignation Archibald was making himself comfortable at his hotel. No man was less shy than he with men, and he asked the waiter all sorts of questions concerning Mrs. Moreton. He learnt that she was a lady of good family who had married badly, and whose husband had left her, having first squandered such fortune as she had. She was very poor, and had been, it was supposed, for some time dependent on her sister, Miss Sumner, who had inherited a few hundred pounds from her mother, the widow of a clergyman, and was as nice and clever a young lady as ever lived.

Primed with this intelligence, Archibald Lester called at Myrtle Cottage the following morning, and was again received by Mrs. Moreton. He had resolved to be bold as a lion, and to make Miss Sumner's acquaintance in the orthodox way; but no sooner was he within her abode, than his courage failed him.

"I have asked my sister," began trembling Mrs. Moreton.

"Oh, indeed!"

"She says,"—a pause.

"Yes—what does she say?" interjected he.

"I am sorry to say, that she says, 'No,'" said she.

"Madam! I did not mean to assume—that on so slight——"

"Oh, sir!" interrupted Mrs. Moreton, "if only you wanted a housekeeper! I should have been so glad of the situation. Why did you advertise?"

"Why indeed! I fear I have made a blunder."

"And Edith would make such a wife, if you only knew each other better."

"I dare say. Where is she?"

"Would you go to her yourself? She won't come to you."

"What could I say?"

"Whatever you thought best."

Here Poppy burst into the room exclaiming, "I want another big silver penny. I told auntie I would come, and she tore my frock."

Edith was in the passage, whither she had followed Poppy, and Archibald caught sight of her. He rose and bowed, less awkwardly than might have been expected. Mrs. Moreton said, "Come in Edith," and, having no excuse, she went in.

"I will be your wife if you will give me another big penny," said the avaricious Poppy. "Auntie says she wont."

This time Mrs. Moreton seized upon her and dragged her away, just as the coveted half-crown was within her reach. To Edith's horror and anger, she shut the door after her, as if to deaden the cries of the disappointed Poppy.

"I am quite ashamed of her and of my sister," said the indignant Edith. "I am surprised that you, Mr. Lester, if you are a gentleman——"

He certainly was a gentleman, though of peculiar fashion, and the "if" aroused his pride. He began to look upon this handsome, decided young lady as a sort of brother-merchant to whom he could speak as if he were on Change. He actually faced her, and in so doing his neck straightened, and his quick eyes twinkled. He was not by any means bad-looking when at his ease and animated, and he found her more enchanting than ever. She had such frank, beautiful hazel eyes, and such a clear, open face.

"I hope—I am—a sort of a gentleman——" he said, hesitating, in spite of his best intentions.

"Then why did you advertise for a housekeeper, and take my sister and I daresay many others, in?"

"Many? A portmanteau-full. I burnt 'em all. Their letters, I mean."

"I wish you had burnt mine—my sister's I should say."

"It was too much to the purpose. Are you always so short?"

"I am considered tall. Have you anything more to say, Mr. Lester?"

There was a business-tone in Edith that set him really at his ease at last. He began to understand that he must cut a sorry figure before so sensible and spirited a girl, so he tried to explain.

"I suppose I really have been foolish, but you see, Miss Edith——"

"My name is Sumner, Mr. Lester."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Sumner;" he continued, shy again. "But

you see, I lost my mother, and I can't get over it. I am not a lady's man, yet one wants a woman to see to one's house. So, I advertised, and—and—I thought if—if—I liked the respondent—I might,—in short, I vainly supposed I could replace my mother."

Edith felt inclined to laugh, but there was a tone in his voice that struck a corresponding note in her heart.

"That, one can never do," she said.

"I suppose not," he returned, glancing into her eyes.

He seemed about to go, so she volunteered to call her sister, and brought the tête-à-tête to a close.

"Did you accept him?" Were Mrs. Moreton's first words when he was gone.

"He never asked me," Edith replied.

"Then, what shall we do and where shall we go?" said Mrs. Moreton, bursting into tears.

"Have you lost all faith in God, Louisa?" asked Edith.

A few hours afterwards a parcel arrived directed to Miss Poppy Moreton. It contained the biggest doll procurable in Martinsborough, and a well sealed letter. While Poppy was dancing with delight her doll in her arms, her mother and aunt broke open the letter. A Bank of England note for ten pounds fell out, together with half a crown; and the following words:—

"DEAR POPPY,

"I send the big silver penny, because you offered to be my wife. You are the only lady living who would make such a proposal, and you must not forget it. I shall not. You or your mamma can do what you will with the piece of paper. Your friend

"ARCHIBALD LESTER"

"I will take the money back directly," said Edith. "It is too much impertinence? Does he think to buy us?"

Vainly Mrs. Moreton tried to oppose this, saying the ten pounds were Poppy's. Edith got possession of it, and went to the hotel. Mr. Lester had left by express. As she returned home, she resolved that she would send back the bank-note to London. Her sister reminded her that they did not know the address, and, therefore, might as well make use of his present. Poverty is a sore pride-tamer, so she was obliged to yield.

Archibald's matrimonial venture had been unsuccessful, and he did not advertise again for a housekeeper. He put the curt note he had received from Mrs. Moreton into his mother's davenport, looked at it occasionally and thought of Edith and Poppy more than of Mrs. Moreton, for they were more to his taste. He was even guilty of a sigh as he remembered his folly and wished he had never seen Myrtle Cottage. Still he occasionally amused himself with writing and tearing up more

sheets of paper ; but it was many months before he posted another letter. He took to going into society, and to making himself agreeable to the ladies : but when he fancied he was succeeding, Poppy's amused "I must, auntie, the gentleman is so funny !" sounded on the ear of his memory ; and he wondered if they were laughing at him.

One evening he took out Edith's laconic epistle, and laid it before him. He thought of the brave girl who had spent all her money for her sister, yet would not marry for the mere sake of riches. He wished he could help her, but how ? At length an idea came to him—an inspiration. He cut a ten pound note in two, and sent one half to Miss Poppy Moreton, reserving the other for despatch on the morrow.

This half-note found Poppy very ill. Edith had undertaken a temporary engagement as daily governess, and was absent when it arrived. They were still struggling hard with poverty. It was the first of April and flash notes from the so called "Bank of Love" were flying about everywhere. Edith had had one, and had put it into the fire. Mrs. Moreton was on the eve of committing Archibald's half-note to the flames also when a call from Poppy stayed her hands. The poor child wanted everything that her friends could not give her, and her only comfort was her big doll, lying with its eyes shut by her side. When Edith came home, she spied the letter.

"Another of those silly notes !" said Mrs. Moreton despondingly. Edith seeing the London postmark, took out the note. She said it looked like a real one. "Impossible," said her sister. "I will find out," said energetic Edith, and rushed off to the bank.

"It was the half of a Bank of England note, there was no doubt of it ;" said an admiring clerk ; "and if the other half did not arrive, he would see if she could get the benefit of the whole." But the other half did arrive, and they joined the twain carefully. Poor Mrs. Moreton pressed her hands to her heart, and said she was sure they came from her husband, and were an earnest of future good : but Edith blushed and said nothing. Poppy derived even more benefit than the kind donor had expected from his gift, for she recovered her health.

Strange events happen in life, which people are apt to call chances, but which are more properly Providences, inasmuch as they bring to pass what no human foresight could.

A man named Moreton applied to Mr. Lester for a vacant clerkship. He looked a sort of worn-out gentleman, who did not promise much work, but he somehow reminded Archibald of Poppy, and he engaged him, giving him an occupation which entailed little or no responsibility. He paid him his salary himself, and finding that he put the greater part of it into a savings bank connected with the establishment, he drew from him that he had a wife and child, to whom he intended to send the money. Of course, these were Mrs. Moreton and Poppy. Lester

told him that he had better take it to them, but Moreton said that he feared the reception he might meet with, as he had not been a good husband or father. Believing him to have been weak and extravagant rather than profligate, Archibald offered to be the bearer of the money, and to see the wife for him. He did not tell him that he had already seen her. Moreton accepted the proposal gratefully, and his benefactor prepared for his journey.

Archibald's heart had never beat so fast or agreeably before, as when he again started for Myrtle Cottage. As he was not going in search of a wife for himself but for another man, he felt as brave as a lion. He trod the space between Martinsborough and the cottage so rapidly that he overtook and passed all who had started on the road before him. Near the cottage he met Edith, returning from her daily toil.

"Oh! Miss Edith!" he said, holding out his hand.

She started, but did not snub him by telling him her name was Sumner. On the contrary, she said,

"Mr. Lester! I am so glad. Thank you a thousand times. You saved Poppy's life."

Archibald was so overcome that he had not another word to say, so they walked on in silence, he thinking how pale and sad she looked. Mrs. Moreton and Poppy were at the door, and recognizing him, greeted him with delight. The cottage looked more shabby than ever, but Edith's flowers still held up their heads. He went in without being asked, telling Mrs. Moreton he wished to speak to her. They sat down as before, he looking at his hat.

"I am come again, you see."

"Oh, sir! thank you for Poppy's doll and the enclosure."

"Not at all: not at all." A pause.

"I am again come—about—a wife."

"Ah, Mr. Lester! Edith is so hard-hearted. I am afraid it is no use."

"You mistake—it is—about you."

"Me! Pray do not insult me. You know I am married."

"Yes; that is why I come."

He was a bad diplomatist. He wanted to break the news, and he stumbled over his own iron.

"Your husband"——

"My husband! Do you know anything of him? Oh! sir, tell me for Heaven's sake."

Mrs. Moreton laid her hand on his shoulder in her emotion, and he gained courage.

"I am his ambassador. He is in my employment, and was too penitent to come himself."

Mrs. Moreton fell on her knees and clasped Archibald's hands.

"Say it again! Say it again!" she cried.

He said it again, and not being strong, the sudden news was too much for her and she fainted.

"Miss Edith! come quickly!" resounded through the passage. Was ever ambassadorial bachelor in such a predicament?

Edith was in the room in a moment, and was soon engaged in restoring animation. Archibald left it when he saw that Mrs. Moreton was recovering, wondering at Edith's self-command. He went into the other parlour and took up a book. It was a German grammar. He understood German, so he studied that language till he was interrupted by Edith, who, closing the door said hastily,

"Is the news you have brought true, Mr. Lester?"

"Quite true. And if your sister will forgive the past there is no reason that they should not be happy again. If he keep steady, I will put him into a better position, so that he may be respectable and able to maintain a wife and child."

Archibald grew fluent enough when speaking of mere business.

"You are, indeed, our benefactor," said Edith, bursting into tears.

What was to come next? No. Edith did not faint, but recovered herself instantly.

"Is this—your grammar? It is not a good one," said he, taking up the book.

"I am trying to learn the language that I may teach it," she said.

"Are you engaged in teaching then? Do you like it?"

"I do not dislike it, but I shall lose my engagement, when my friends and—employers leave Martinsborough."

"You had better make another."

"I wish I could."

Their eyes met, and it would be difficult to say which coloured most.

"I am a blundering, stupid fellow, and I scarcely know what you must think of me," said he. "Have you forgiven the advertisement affair?"

"What would have become of us without it? Your first gift kept a house over our heads: your second saved our darling, and now you bring hope with you. Do you think Mr. Moreton is sincere?"

"He works hard, which is a good sign; and if he remains with me, I will give him plenty to do. Nothing like work, Miss Edith, to keep men out of mischief."

"And women, too; if my sister had definite employment, she would be far happier."

"She says she can keep house. If she and her husband make it up, do you think she would still take charge of mine, and so answer my advertisement after all?"

"How could that be, Mr. Lester? Though she would be too happy to remove."

Archibald did not then explain, and, after some further conversation left them.

A few weeks after his return to London, there was much excitement in his palace of a house in the city, called by him his offices, but once inhabited by his parents. The first floor had been furnished, neither clerks nor servants knew for whom, and its future inmates were expected. Fires and gas blazed upstairs and dispersed the cold of winter and the fog of the city. A good feast was spread in a large comfortable room, and the old housekeeper waited expectant.

Archibald was down stairs in a gloomy office, surrounded by old-fashioned furniture, desks, big maps, piles of ledgers, and cobwebs. He professed to be writing, as usual, but was now gazing on a spider opposite, as persevering as Bruce's. There was noise enough without, but within all was quiet. At last, amongst all the cabs, carts and waggons, he was sure he heard one particular cab stop at the door. There was a bustle in the big hall, and a child's voice rang cheerily through the vaults of the passages.

"I wonder if she is come!" he murmured, getting up and sitting down again; then taking from his pocket-book the copy of one of his laconic epistles, he read it half aloud:

"DEAR MISS EDITH,—Could *you* answer my advertisement? If so, and if you would try to love such a 'funny gentleman,' come with them. If not, do not come yet awhile for his sake. ARCHIBALD LESTER."

"Oh no! she is not come," he sighed.

He waited more than an hour, then he went timidly up his own wide staircase, dimly lighted from the landing and knocked at a door. As it was opened he was greeted by a sight, gratifying yet disappointing. Mr. and Mrs. Moreton sat side by side near the blazing fire—Poppy, asleep in her father's arms, her big doll nestled to her little breast. There was no Edith! Alas poor Archibald! his heart sank and he was about to retreat with a murmured, "Never mind: I will come to-morrow," when a low voice whispered from within the door, "come in." It was Edith after all. He saw her blushing face, and taking the hand she held out, he drew her into the passage. He felt bold enough now, yet he could only say,

"Edith! you have come then!"

"Yes," said the trembling girl.

"And you came because——"

"I came because you asked me."

"Is it—is it gratitude or love?"

"It is both in one."

"Then your sister will live here, and you will be my dear wife."

The bright hazel eyes shone like stars in the dull light, as, for the first time, he dared to look fully into them. Both hands were placed confidently in his, and, as his hazy timidity gradually melted in the warm sunshine of affection, he learnt that his advertisement was, indeed, doubly answered.

GRAVES.

BENEATH the radiance shed
 From minster's storied fane
 They sleep, the dead, whose steps no more may tread
 The earth's blue hills again :
 Or in still churchyards, where the grey clouds pass
 Above the daisied grass.

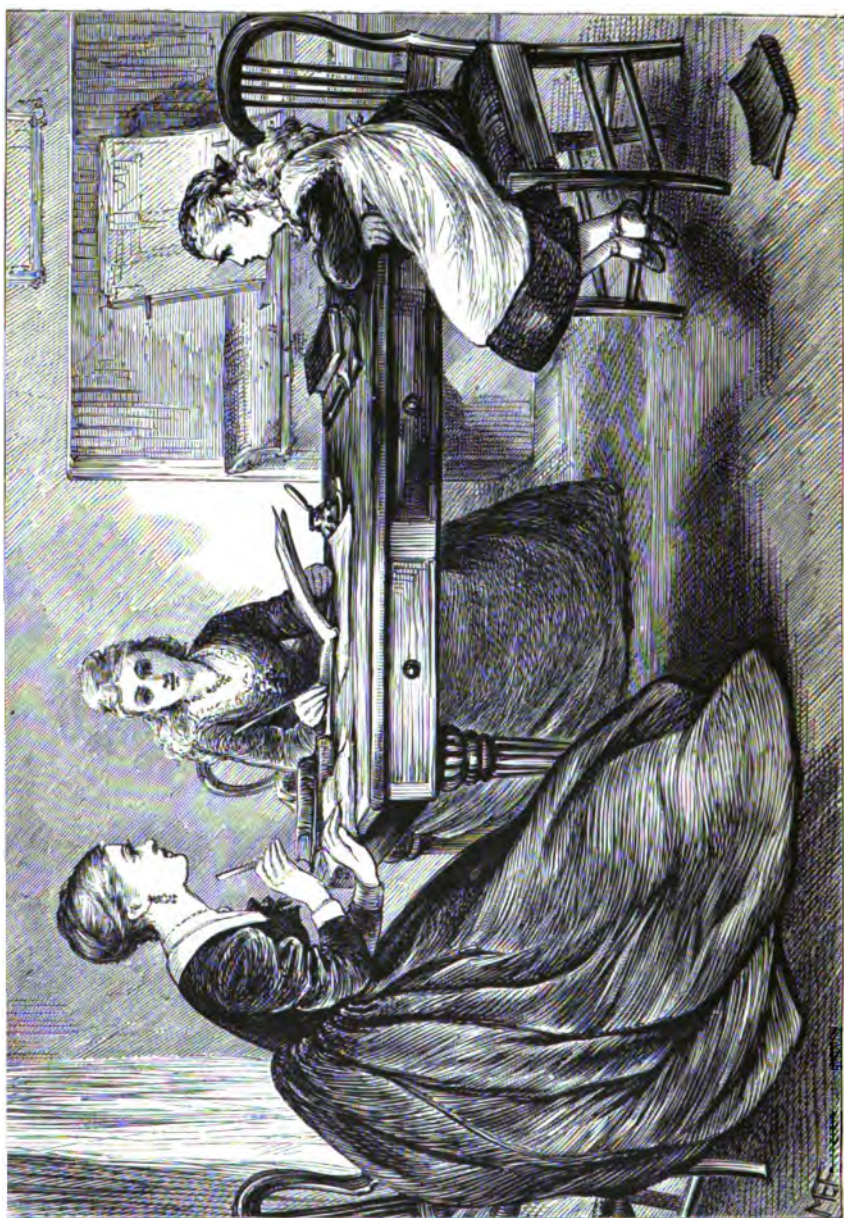
They rest amid the green
 And sylvan solitude
 Of forests lone, the waving trees between.
 • Each sunny land is strewed
 With silent mounds, which wandering airs caress,
 On rock and wilderness.

Their shadows lie across
 These changing lives of ours,
 And some grey headstone, yellowed o'er with moss,
 Rises amid our flowers ;
 While oft the sunlight falls, the violet waves,
 Over forgotten graves.

There on sweet sunset eves,
 The wild-bird chants its lay
 Above their rest ; the poplar's silvery leaves
 In winds of twilight play ;
 And the blue forget-me-nots their starry eyes
 Lift to the summer skies.

Yet, though o'er each calm spot
 The mourner's sigh is mute :
 Although the low, untended mounds are sought
 By no familiar foot :
 Where God's beloved sleep, His peace around
 Maketh it holy ground.

J. I. L.



EDMUND EVANS.

MISS FLORA'S FIRST LESSON.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

THE ARGOSY

MAY 1, 1873.

THE MASTER OF GREYLANDS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XIII.

A STORM OF WIND.

THE wind was rising. Coming in gusts from across the sea, it swept round the Dolphin Inn with a force that seemed to shake the old walls and stir the window-panes—for the corner that made the site of the inn was always an exposed one. Madame Guise, undressing slowly by the expiring fire in her chamber, shivered as she listened to it.

The wind did not howl in this fashion around her own sheltered home in the sunny Dauphiné. There was no grand sea there for it to whirl and play over, and come off with a shrieking moan. Not often there did they get cold weather like this ; or white snow covering the plains ; or ice in the water-jugs. And never yet before in her uneventful life, had it fallen to her lot to travel all across France from South to North with a little child to take care of, and then to encounter the many hours' passage in a stifling boat on a rough and raging sea ; and after a night's rest in London to come off again in the cold English stage-coach for how many miles she knew not. All this might have served to take the colour from her face and to give the shiverings to her frame—for land travelling in those days was not the easy pastime it is made now.

But there was worse behind it. Not the cold, not the want of rest, was it, that was so trying her, but the frightful whispers of a supposed tragedy that had (so to say) greeted her arrival at the Dolphin. But a few hours within its walls, and she had been told that him of whom she had come in secret search, her husband, had disappeared out of life.

For this poor young lady, Charlotte Guise, was in truth the wife of An-

thony Castlemaine. His wife if he were still living ; his widow if he were dead. That he was dead, hearing all she had heard, no doubt could exist in her mind ; no hope of the contrary, not the faintest shadow of it, could enter her heart. She had come all this long journey in search of her husband, fearing some vague treachery ; she had arrived to find that treachery of the deepest dye had only too probably put him out of sight for ever.

When the father, Basil Castlemaine, was on his death-bed, she had heard the charge he gave to Anthony, to come over to England and put in the claim to his rightful inheritance ; she had heard the warning of possible treachery that had accompanied it.

Basil died. And when Anthony, in obedience to his father's last injunctions, was making ready for the journey to England, his wife recalled the warning to him. He laughed at her. He answered jokingly : saying that if he never returned to France she might come off to see the reason and whether he was still in the land of the living. Ah ! how many a word spoken in jest would, if we might read the future, bear a solemn meaning ! That was one.

Anthony Castlemaine departed on his mission, leaving his wife and little child in their home at Gap. The first letter she received from him told her of his arrival at Greylands, and that he had put up at the Dolphin Inn. It intimated that he might not find his course a very smooth one, and that his Uncle James was in possession of Greylands' Rest. Some days further on she received a second letter from him ; and following closely upon it, by the next post in fact, a third. Both these letters bore the same date. The first of them stated that he was not advancing at all ; that all kinds of impediments were being placed in his way by his uncles ; they appeared resolved to keep him out of the estate, refusing even to show him how it was left ; and it ended with an expressed conviction that his Uncle James was usurping it. The last letter told her that since posting the other letter earlier in the day, he had seen his Uncle James ; that the interview, which had taken place in a meadow, was a stormy one, his uncle even having tried to strike him : that he really did not know what to be at, but had resolved to try for one more conference before proceeding to take legal measures, and that he should certainly write to her again in the course of a day or two to tell her whether matters progressed or whether they did not. In this last letter there ran a vein of sadness, very perceptible to the wife. She thought her husband must have been in very bad spirits when he wrote it : and she anxiously looked for the further news promised.

It never came. No subsequent letter ever reached her. After waiting some days, she wrote to her husband at the Dolphin Inn, but she got no answer. She wrote again, and with the like result. Then, feeling strangely uneasy, not knowing how to get tidings of him, or to whom to

apply, she began to think that she would have to put in practice the suggestion he had but spoken in jest, and go over to England to look after him. A short period of vacillation—for it looked like a frightfully formidable step to the untravelled young lady—and she resolved upon it. Arranging the affairs of her petit ménage, as she expressed it, she started off with her child; and in due time reached London. There she stayed one night, after sending off a note, directed to her husband at Greylands, to tell of her intended arrival on the following day: and in the morning she took her seat in the Stilborough coach.

Forewarned, forearmed, is an old saying. Anthony Castlemaine's wife had been warned, and she strove to be armed. She would not present herself openly and in her own name at Greylands. If the Castlemaine family were dealing hardly with her husband, it would be more prudent for her to go to work warily and appear there at first as a stranger. The worst she feared was, that Mr. James Castlemaine might be holding her husband somewhere at bay; perhaps even had put him in a prison—she did not understand the English laws—and she must seek him out and release him. So she called herself Guise. Her name had been Guise before her marriage, and she assumed it now. Not much of an assumption: in accordance with the French customs of her native place, she retained her maiden name as an affix to her husband's and her cards were printed, Madame Castlemaine-Guise. Her intention had been to proceed to Stilborough, put up there, and come over to Greylands the following day; but the little girl's symptoms of feverish illness in the coach afforded a pretext for halting there. And so, here she was, at the often-heard-of Dolphin Inn, inhabiting the very chamber that her ill-fated husband had occupied, and with the dread story she had listened to beating its terrors in her brain.

A gust of wind shook the white dimity curtain, drawn before the casement, and she turned to it with a shiver. What did this angry storm of wind mean? Why should it have arisen suddenly without apparent warning? Charlotte Guise was rather superstitious, and asked herself the question. When she got out of the coach at the inn door, the air and sea were calm. Could the angry disturbance have come to show her that the very elements were rising at the wrong dealt out to her husband? Some such an idea took hold of her.

"Every second minute I ask whether it can be true," she murmured in her native language, "or whether I have but dropped asleep in my own house and am dreaming it all. It is not like reality. It is not like any story I ever heard before. Anthony comes over here, all those hundreds of weary miles, over that miserable sea, and finds himself amid his family; his family whom he had never seen. Greylands' Rest is mine, I think? he says to them; 'will you give it to me?' And they deny that it is his. 'Then,' says he 'what you say may be so; but you should just show me the deeds—the proofs that it is not mine.'

And they decline to show them ; and his uncle, James Castlemaine, at an interview in the field, seeks to strike him. Anthony comes home to the inn here, and writes that last letter to me, and puts it in the post late at night. Then he and the landlord go strolling out together in the moonlight, and by and by they see Mr. James Castlemaine go into a lonely place of cloisters called the Friar's Keep, and he, my poor husband, runs in after him ; and he never comes out of it again. The landlord, waiting for him outside, hears a shot and an awful cry, but he does not connect it with the cloisters ; and so he walks about till he's weary, thinking the uncle and nephew are talking together, and—and Anthony never at all comes out again ! Yes, it is very plain ; it is too plain to me : that shot took my dear husband's life. James Castlemaine, fearing he would make good his claim to the estate and turn him out of it, has murdered him."

The wind shrieked, as if it were singing a solemn requiem ; the small panes of the casement seemed to crack, and the white curtain fluttered. Charlotte Guise hid her shrinking face for a moment, and then turned it on the shaking curtain, her white lips parting with some scarcely breathed words.

"If the spirits of the dead are permitted to hover in the air, as some people believe, perhaps *his* is here now, at this very window ! Seeking to hold commune with my spirit ; calling upon me to avenge him. Oh, Anthony, yes ! I will never rest until I have found out the mystery of your fate. I will devote my days to doing it!"

As if to encourage the singular fancy, that the whispered story and the surroundings of the hour had called up in her over-strung nerves and brain, a gust wilder than any that had gone before swept past the house at the moment with a rushing moan. The casement shook ; its fastenings seemed to strain : and the poor young lady, in some irrepressible freak of courage, born of desperation, drew aside the curtain, and looked forth.

No, no ; nothing was there but the wind. The white snow lay on the ground and covered the cliff skirting the beach on the right. The night was light, disclosing the foam of the waves as they rose and fell ; clouds were sweeping across the face of the sky.

The little girl stirred in bed and threw out her arms. Her mother let fall the window curtain and softly approached her. The hot face wore its fever-crimson ; the large brown eyes, so like her father's, opened ; the red lips parted with a cry.

"Maman ! Marie soif ; Marie veut boire."

"Oh, is she fatherless?" mentally cried the poor mother, as she took up the glass of tisane. "Oui, ma petite ! ma chérie ! Bois donc, Marie ; bois !"

The child seized the glass with her hot and trembling little hands, and drank from it. She seemed very thirsty. Before her mother had

re-placed it within the fender and come back to her, her pretty face was on the pillow again, her eyes were closing.

Madame Guise—as we must continue to call her—went to bed : but not to sleep. The wind raged, the child by her side was restless, her own mind was in a chaos of horror and trouble. The words of the Prophet Isaiah in Holy Writ might indeed have been applied to her : The whole head was sick and the whole heart faint.

Towards morning she dropped into a disturbed sleep, during which a dream visited her. She thought she was alone in a strange, dark garden : gloomy trees clustered about her, ugly looking mountains rose above. She seemed to be searching for something, but she did not know for what ; a great dread, or terror, lay upon her, and but for being impelled she would not have put one foot before the other in the dark path. Suddenly, as she was pushing through the impeding trees, her husband stood before her. She put out her hand to greet him ; he did not respond to it, but remained where he had halted, a few paces off, gazing at her fixedly. It was not the husband who had parted from her in the sunny South ; a happy man full of glad anticipations, with a bright, fresh face and joyous words on his lips : but her husband with a sad, stern countenance, pale, cold, and still. Her heart seemed to sink within her, and before she could ask him what was amiss she saw that he was holding his waistcoat and clothes aside with his left hand, to display a shot in the region of the heart. A most dreadful sensation of terror, far more dreadful than any she could ever know in this life, seized upon her at the sight ; she screamed aloud, and awoke. Awoke with the drops of moisture on her face, and trembling in every limb.

Now, as will be clear to every practical mind, this dream must have been only the result of her own imaginative thoughts, of the fears and doubts she had been indulging before going to sleep. But she, poor distressed, lonely lady, looked upon it as a revelation. From that moment she never doubted that her husband had been shot as described ; shot in the heart and killed : and that the hand that did it was Mr. Castlemaine's.

"I knew his spirit might be hovering about me," she murmured, trying to still her trembling. "He has been permitted to appear to me to show me the truth—to enjoin on me the task of bringing the deed to light. By Heaven's help I will do it. I will never quit this spot, this Greylands, until I have accomplished it. Yes, Anthony !—can you hear me, my husband ?—I vow to devote myself to the discovery ; I will bring this dark wickedness into the broad glare of noonday. Country, kindred, home, friends !—I will forget them all, Anthony, in my search for you.

"Where have they hidden him ?" she resumed after a pause. "Had Mr. Castlemaine an accomplice ?—or did he act alone. Oh, alone ;

of a certainty, alone," she continued, answering her own question. "He would not have dared it had others been present, and the landlord below says Mr. Castlemaine went by himself into the cloisters. Did he fling him into the sea after he was dead?—or did he conceal him somewhere in the place? Perhaps he buried him in it? if so, his body is lying in unconsecrated ground, and it will never rest. Marie, then, my little one, what is it? Are you better this morning?"

The child was awaking. She had been baptised and registered in her native place as Mary Ursula. Her grandfather, Basil, never called her anything else; her father would sometimes shorten it to "Marie Ursule:" but her mother, not so well accustomed to the English tongue as they were, generally used but the one name, Marie. She looked up and put out her little hands to her mother: her eyes were heavy, her cheeks flushed and feverish. Mrs. Bent privately put down the non-improvement to the tisane. Had the child taken a good wholesome powder over night, she believed she would have been all right this morning.

Mr. Parker, the doctor, came in answer to the summons, sent for him: a grey-haired, large-hearted, talkative man, who had private means, and had retired from his large practice at Stilborough to the quietude of Greylands. The little girl had inflammation of the chest, he said, and must stay in bed.

The child's illness lasted for several days. Sitting by her bed, Madame Guise had time to reflect upon and mature her plans. Her sole object in life now—save and except the child—was to search out the mystery of her husband's fate; her one hope to bring home the crime to Mr. Castlemaine. How to set about it she knew not. She would have to account in some plausible manner for her prolonged stay at Greylands, and to conceal her real identity. Above all, she must take care never to betray interest in the fate of Anthony Castlemaine.

To stay in Greylands, or in England at all, might be rather difficult, unless she could get some employment to eke out her means. She knew perfectly well that without her husband's signature, the cautious French bankers and men of business who held his property in their hands, would not advance much, if any, of it to her, unless proofs were forthcoming of his death. She possessed a little income of her own; this was available, and she must concert ways and means of its being transmitted to her in secret, without Greylands learning who she was and what she was. This might be done: but the money would not be enough to support her and her child comfortably as gentlewomen.

"I think I should like to make a sojourn here in Greylands," she observed to Mrs. Bent, cautiously opening the subject, on the first day that Marie could be pronounced convalescent, and was down in the parlour for change.

"Why! should you, ma'am!" returned the landlady briskly. "Well, it's a nice place."

"I like the sea—and I should wish my little one to remain quiet now. I have suffered too much anxiety on her account to take her travelling again just yet."

"Sweet little thing!" aspirated Mrs. Bent. "Her pretty rosy colour is beginning to come back to her cheeks again. I've never seen a child with a brighter."

"It is like her—like that of some of our relatives: they have a bright colour," said Madame Guise, who only just saved herself from saying—like her father's. "For her sake I will remain here for some two or three months. Do you think I could get an apartment?"

"An apartment!" repeated Mrs. Bent, who took the word literally, and was somewhat puzzled at it. "Did you mean one single room, ma'am?"

"I mean two or three rooms—as might be enough. Or a small house—what you call a cottage."

"Oh I see, ma'am," said the landlady. "I think you might do that. Some of the larger cottages let rooms in the summer to people coming over here from Stilborough for the sea air. And there's one or two pretty cottages empty on the cliff."

"Would the rent of one be much?" asked Madame Guise, timorously.

"Next to nothing at this season," spoke Mrs. Bent, confidently. "Here, John Bent—where are you?" she cried, flinging open the door. "What's the rent of that place——"

"Master's out," interrupted Molly, coming from the back kitchen to speak.

"Just like him!" retorted Mrs. Bent. "He is out when he's wanted, and at home when he's not."

The cottage she alluded to had a sitting-room, a kitchen, and two bed-chambers, and was situated in the most picturesque part of all the cliff, close to the neatly kept cottage that had so long been inhabited by Miss Hallet and her very pretty niece. It was plainly furnished, and might be let at this season, including steel knives and forks, for fifteen shillings a week. In summer the rent would be twenty-five: and the tenant had to find linen. With the rent, and the cost of a servant, and housekeeping, and various little extras that are somehow never computed beforehand, but that rise up inevitably afterwards, Madame Guise saw that the sum total would be more than she could command. And she hesitated to take the cottage.

"If I could but earn a little money!" she repeated to herself. "I wonder whether those good ladies at the Grey Nunnery could help me! I have a great mind to ask them."

She went over to do so. It was a warm, pleasant day; for the

capricious weather had once more changed ; the snow and frost given place to soft west winds and genial sunshine—and Madame Guise was shown into the reception parlour. Sisters Margaret and Betsey sat in it, and rose at her entrance. They had heard of this lady traveller, who had been detained on her journey by the illness of her little girl, and was staying at the Dolphin ; but they had not seen her. It was with some curiosity, therefore, that the ladies gazed to see what she was like. A slender, lady-like, nice-looking young woman, with blue eyes and fair hair, and who seemed to carry some care on her countenance.

Madame Guise introduced herself ; apologising for her intrusion, and telling them at once its object. She wished to make some stay at Greylands, for she thought the pure air, the sea-breezes, would strengthen her child—could the ladies help her to some employment by which she might earn a trifle. She could teach music, French, or do fine needlework ; embroidery and the like.

The ladies answered her very kindly—they were both taken with the gentle stranger—but shook their heads to her petition : they had no help to give.

“The children we bring up here are of poor parentage and do not need accomplishments,” said Sister Margaret. “If they did, we should teach them in the Nunnery : indeed we should be thankful to get pupils of a better class ourselves, for we are but poor. Sister Mona is a good French scholar ; and Sister Charlotte’s music is perfect. As to fine work, we do not know any one who requires it to be done.”

“Not but that we should have been glad to help you, if we could,” put in Sister Betsey, with a pleasant smile.

Madame Guise rose, stifling a sigh. She saw exactly how it was—that the Grey Nunnery was about the last place able to assist her. In leaving the parlour, she met a lady, young and stately, who was entering it ; one of wondrous beauty, tall, majestic, of gracious manner and presence.

“Our Superior, Sister Mary Ursula,” said Sister Betsey.

And Madame Guise knew that it was her husband’s cousin—for Miss Castlemaine had joined the sisterhood some days past. She wore the clear muslin cap over her luxuriant hair, but not the grey habit, for she had not put aside the mourning for her father. In the magnificent dark eyes, in the bright complexion, and in the beautiful features, Madame Guise saw the likeness to her husband and to the rest of the Castlemaines. Sister Mary Ursula bowed and said a few gracious words : Madame Guise responded with one of her elaborate French curtsies, and passed onwards through the gate.

“So that hope has failed !” she thought as she crossed over to the inn. “I might have known it would : with so many accomplished ladies among themselves, they cannot want other people’s aid.”

Buried in thought, Madame Guise did not go at once indoors, but

sat down on the bench outside the house. The window of the sitting-room, occupied by John Bent and his wife, stood open—for Mrs. Bent liked plenty of fresh air. On that same bench had sat more than once her unfortunate husband, looking at the water as she was looking, at the fishermen on the beach, at the boats out at sea, their white sails at rest in the calm of the sunshiny day. She was mentally questioning what else she could try, now that her mission to the Grey Sisters had failed, and wondering how little she and Marie could live upon, if she got nothing to do. Gradually the talking became clearer to her ear. She heard the landlady's voice and another voice: not John Bent's, but the young, free, ready voice of a gentleman. It was in truth Harry Castlemaine's; who, passing the inn, had turned in for a gossip.

"It seems to me like a great sacrifice, Mr. Harry," were the first distinct words that fell on Madame Guise's ear. "The Grey Ladies are very good and noble, next door to angels, I'm sure, when folks are sick; but it is not the right life for Miss Castlemaine to take to."

"We told her so until we were tired of telling it," returned Harry Castlemaine. "It has cut up my father grievously. We will drop the subject, Mrs. Bent: I cannot speak of it with patience yet. How is the sick child getting on?"

"As well as can be, sir. She is just now upstairs in her mid-day sleep. Talking of children, though," broke off Mrs. Bent, "what is this mishap that has happened to Miss Flora, sir? We hear she met with some accident yesterday."

"Mounted to the top of the gardener's ladder and fell off it," said Harry with equanimity. "She is always in mischief."

"And was she hurt, sir?"

"Not much. Grazed her face in a few places and put her wrist out. She will come to greater grief unless they get somebody to take care of her. Having been so long without a governess, the young damsel is like a wild colt."

"The last time Mrs. Castlemaine was in here, Mr. Harry, she told me she had just engaged a governess. It must be a fortnight ago."

"And so she had engaged one; but the lady was taken ill and threw up the situation. Mrs. Castlemaine is hard to please in the matter of governesses. She must have perfect French and perfect music: and the two, combined with other requisite qualifications, seem difficult to find. Mrs. Castlemaine was talking this morning of advertising for one."

"Dear me! to think that such a fine place as that should be going a begging!" cried the landlady. "A gentleman's home and a plenty of comfort in it, and—and however much pay is it, a year, Mr. Harry?"

"Fifty guineas, I think," said the young man carelessly, as though fifty guinea salaries were an every day trifle. Mrs. Bent lifted her hands and eyes.

"Fifty guineas!—and her bed and board! And only one little lady to teach; and gentlefolks to live with! My goodness! Mr. Harry, one would think half the ladies in England would jump at it."

One lady at least was ready to "jump" at it: she who sat outside, overhearing the tale. Her lips parted as she listened; her cheeks flushed with excitement. Oh, if she herself could obtain this place!—become an inmate of the house where dwelt her husband's enemy, James Castlemaine! How seemingly clear and straightforward would be her path of discovery then, compared with what it was now, or with any other position she could hope to be placed in! She could daily, hourly watch Mr. Castlemaine, and it must surely be her fault if she did not track home the crime to him! As to her fitness for the post, why French was her native language, and in music she was a finished artiste and she could certainly undertake general instruction!

While the red flush was yet on her face, the light of excitement in her eyes, Harry Castlemaine came out. Seeing her sitting there, he took off his hat and politely accosted her, saying he was glad to hear the little girl was improving. Madame Guise rose. It was the first time she had spoken to him.

"I thank you, sir, for your good wishes: yes, she is getting well now. And I—I beg your pardon, sir—I think I heard you just now say to Madame Bent that you found it difficult to get a governess for your house."

"My people find it so. Why?—do you know of one?" he added, smiling.

"I think I do, sir."

"Mrs. Castlemaine is very difficult to please, especially as regards French," he said, still smiling; "and the French of some of the ladies who have applied has turned out to be very English French, so it would not suit her. Should you chance to know of any lady really eligible, madam, you would be conferring a favour in introducing her to the notice of Mrs. Castlemaine."

"Sir, I will think of it."

He lifted his hat again as he wished her good-day. And Madame Guise, gazing after him, thought that Heaven was surely working for her, in thus opening a prospect of entrance to the house of Mr. Castlemaine.

CHAPTER XIV.

GETTING IN BY DECEIT.

TURNING out of the Dolphin Inn, by its front entrance, went Charlotte Guise, in her best mourning attire. It was a bright afternoon, and the fields were green again. They lay on either side her road—the inland coach road that the stage was wont to traverse. Leaving Mr. Parker's

house on her left—for it was in this spot that the doctor's residence was situated—she presently came to the turning to Greylands' Rest, and passed on up the avenue. It was a wide avenue, not far short of half a mile in length, with trees on either side; oak, elm, birch, larch, poplar, lime, and others. At its end, was the lodge gate admitting to the domain of Greylands' Rest.

The house lay still and quiet in the sunshine. Madame Guise looked at it with yearning eyes, for it was the place that had probably cost her poor husband his life. But for putting in his claim to it, he might be living yet: and whether that claim was a right or a wrong one, she hoped with her whole heart would be proved before she herself should die. Passing round the fine green lawn, among the seats, the trees, the shrubs, and the flower-beds, she gained the porch entrance. Miles answered her ring.

"Can I see Mrs. Castlemaine?"

"Mrs. Castlemaine is out in the carriage, ma'am. Mr. Castlemaine is at home."

Hesitating a moment, for the very name of the Master of Greylands carried to her heart a shrinking dread, and yet fearful lest delay might cause her application to be too late, she said she would be glad to speak with Mr. Castlemaine. Miles admitted her into the hall—a good, old-fashioned room with a wood fire blazing in it. Along a passage to the right lay the drawing-room, and into this room Miles ushered the lady.

Mrs. Castlemaine generally went out for a drive once a day. This afternoon she had taken Flora; whose face was adorned with sundry patches of sticking plaister, the result of the fall off the ladder. In the red parlour sat Ethel Reese, painting flowers on cardboard for a hand-screen: and the Master of Greylands stood with his back to the fire, talking with her. They were speaking of Miss Castlemaine.

"Papa, I do not think we must hope it," Ethel was saying. "Rely upon it, Mary will not come out again."

Mr. Castlemaine's face darkened at the words. Though holding the same conviction himself, the step his niece had taken in entering the Nunnery was so unpalatable to him that he could not bear to hear the opinion confirmed. He hated the Grey Sisters. He would have rid Greylands of their presence, had it been in his power.

"It is a sin, so to waste her life!" he said, his deep tones betraying his mortification. "Ethel, I think we cannot have made her happy here."

"It was nothing of that, papa. She told me she had been cherishing the idea before she came to Greylands."

"A meddling, tattling, tabby-cat set of women! Mary Ursula ought to—Well, what now, Miles?" For the man had entered the room and was waiting to speak.

"A lady has come here, sir, asking to see Mrs. Castlemaine. When I said the mistress was out, she said she would be glad to speak a few words to you. She is in the drawing-room, sir."

"What lady is it?" returned the Master of Greylands.

"Well, sir, I'm not altogether sure, but I fancy it is the one staying at the Dolphin; her with the sick child. Anyway, she's a very nice, pleasant-speaking young lady, sir, whoever it is."

"I'm sure I don't know what she can want with me," remarked Mr. Castlemaine, as he walked off to the drawing-room, and laid his hand on the door. Thought is quick: and a fancy of what might have brought her here came across his mind ere he turned the handle.

She was seated near the fire in the handsome but low-ceilinged room; her face studiously turned from the one conspicuous portrait that hung opposite the chimney-glass, for its likeness to her husband had struck on her with a chill. She rose at Mr. Castlemaine's entrance and curtsied as only a French woman can curtsey. He saw an elegant-looking young woman with a pleasing countenance and somewhat shrinking manner. Mr. Castlemaine took her to be timid; probably unused to society: for in these, the opening minutes of the interview, she trembled visibly. The idea that had crossed him was, that this lady, having to encounter the detention at the Dolphin inn, might be finding herself short of funds to pursue her journey, and had come to apply to him in the difficulty. Readily would he have responded; for he had a generous hand, an open heart. To hear therefore what the real object of her visit was—that of soliciting the situation of governess, vacant in his household, surprised him not a little.

The tale she told was plausible. Mr. Castlemaine, utterly unsuspecting, doubted nothing of its truth. The lady made a favourable impression on him, and he was very courteous to her.

She was a widow, she said: and she had come over from Paris to this country for two objects. One was to seek out a relative that she believed was somewhere in it, though she did not know for certain whether he was dead or alive; the other was to obtain employment as a governess—for she had been given to understand that good French governesses were at a premium in the English country, and her own means were but slender, not adequate to the support of herself and little girl. Journeying along by coach, she had found her child attacked with fever, which compelled her to halt at Greylands. Liking the place, perceiving that it was open and healthy, she had been thinking that she should do well to keep her child in it for a time, and therefore was hoping to make her arrangements to do so. Should she be so fortunate as to obtain the post in Mr. Castlemaine's household, the thing would be easy.

"But—pardon me, madam—what, in that case, would you do with the child?" asked Mr. Castlemaine.

"I would place her at nurse with some good woman, sir. That would not be difficult. And the little thing would enjoy all the benefit of the sea-air. In my country, children are more frequently brought up at nurse than at home."

"I have heard so," observed Mr. Castlemaine. "You speak English remarkably well, madam, for a Frenchwoman. Have you been much in this country?"

"Never before, sir. My mother was English, and she always talked to me in her own tongue. I was reared to her faith—the Protestant. My father was French and a Catholic. Upon their marriage it was agreed that of the children to be born, the boys should be brought up to his faith and the girls to hers. There came no boy, however; and only one girl—me."

All this was true. Madame Guise did not add, for it was unnecessary, that towards the close of her father's life he entered into large speculations; and became a ruined man. He and her mother were both dead now.

"And it is, I presume, to see your mother's relatives that you have come to England?" pursued Mr. Castlemaine.

"Yes, sir," she answered after a moment of hesitation, for it came hard to Charlotte Guise to tell a deliberate untruth, although necessity might justify it. "My mother used to talk of one relative that she had here—a brother. He may not be living now: I do not know."

"In what part of England did he live?"

"I think he must have been a traveller, sir, for he seemed to move about. We would hear of him, now in the south of England, now in the north, and now in the west. Mostly he seemed to be in what my mother called remote countries—Cumberland and Westmoreland."

"Cumberland and Westmoreland!" echoed Mr. Castlemaine. "Dear me! And have you no better clue to him than that?"

"No better, sir; no other. I do not, I say, know whether he is dead or alive."

"Well, it seems—pardon me—to be a somewhat wild-goose chase that you have entered on in searching for him. What is his name?"

"My mother's maiden name was Williams. He was her brother."

Mr. Castlemaine shook his head. "A not at all uncommon name," he said, "and I fear, madam, you might find some difficulty in tracing him out."

"Yes, I fear so. I find those places are very far off. At any rate, I will not think more of it for the present. My little child; I see it now; is too young to travel."

In all this account, Madame Guise had spoken the simple truth. The facts were as she stated. The only falsehood in it was, the representation that it was this relative, this never-yet-met uncle, she had come over to search out. During her long journey through France,

she had said to herself that after she had found her husband, they might perhaps go together to seek her uncle : but that was all.

"Yes, the little one is too young and delicate to travel," pursued Madame Guise, "and I dare not take her on. This illness of hers has frightened me, and I shall, if possible, remain here by the sea. Should you admit me into your house, sir, I will do my best to help on the studies of your daughter."

"But—will you reconcile yourself to fill a situation of this kind in a stranger's house, after having ruled in a home of your own?" questioned Mr. Castlemaine considerably, as he remembered his wife's domineering and difficult temper.

"Ah, sir, the beggars, you know, must not be the choosers. I must do something to keep me, and I would like to do this."

"The salary Mrs. Castlemaine offers is fifty guineas."

"It seems a large sum to me, sir," was the truthful and candid answer. "Appointments in France, a very few excepted, are not so highly paid as in England. I should of course be permitted to go out and see my child?"

"Dear me, yes ; whenever you pleased, madam. You would be quite at liberty here—be as one of ourselves entirely. Mrs. Castlemaine—but here she is ; returning home."

The Master of Greylands had heard the carriage drawing up. He quitted the room, and said a few hasty words to his wife of what had occurred. Mrs. Castlemaine, much taken with the project, came in in her black satin pelisse, coated with crape. She put a few questions as to the applicant's acquirements.

"I am a brilliant pianist, madam, as I know you sometimes phrase it in your country," said Madame Guise. "My French is of course pure ; and I could teach dancing. Not drawing : I do not understand it."

"Drawing is quite a minor consideration," replied Mrs. Castlemaine. "Could you undertake the English?"

"Why not, madam ? I am as well read in English as in French. And I am clever at embroidery, and other kinds of fine and fancy needlework."

"Do you fully understand that you would have to undertake Miss Reene's music also ? She is my step-daughter."

"It would be a pleasure to me, madam. I am fond of music."

Mr. Castlemaine came into the room again. "What part of France have you lived in?" he asked. "Did I understand you to say in Paris?"

Another necessary lie, or next door to one, for Charlotte Guise ! Were she to say, "My native province is that of the Dauphiné and I have lived near Gap ; it might open their eyes to suspicion at once. She swallowed down a cough that rose, and partly choked herself.

"Not quite in Paris, sir. A little beyond it."

"And—pardon me—could you give references?"

Madame Guise looked up helplessly. The colour rose in her face; for the fear of losing the appointment became very present to her.

"I know not how. I never was a governess before; and in that respect no one could speak for me. I am of respectable family: my father was a rentier, and much considered: I am of discreet conduct and manners, — surely you cannot doubt it," she added, the tears of emotion rising to her eyes, as she looked at them.

They looked back in return. Mr. Castlemaine thinking what a nice, ladylike, earnest woman she was, one he could take on trust; Mrs. Castlemaine, entirely seduced by the prospect of the pure French for Flora, eagerly wanting to ratify the bargain. Madame Guise mistook the silence, supposing they were hesitating.

"I could have a letter written to you from Paris," she said. "I possess a friend there, who will, I am sure, satisfy you that I am of good conduct and family. Would there be more than this required?"

"Not *any* more, it would be *quite* sufficient," Mrs. Castlemaine hastened to say. And, without waiting for the promised letter—which, as she observed, could come later—she engaged the governess on the spot. Mr. Castlemaine attended Madame Guise to the door: and never a suspicion crossed him that she was—who she was.

Madame went out from the interview. In some respects it had not been satisfactory: or, rather, not in accordance with her ante-impressions. She had gone to it picturing Mr. Castlemaine as some great monster of iniquity; some crafty, cruel, sinister man, from whom the world might shrink. She found him a very good-looking, pleasing, and polished gentleman, with a high-bred air, a kind and apparently sincere manner, and with the wonderful face-resemblance to his brother Basil and to her own poor husband, Anthony. How had it been possible, she asked herself, for so apparently correct a man to commit that most dreadful crime? How wickedly deceitful some great criminals were!

Mrs. Bent, when consulted, made strong objection to the nursing scheme, expressing a most decided opinion against it.

"Put the sweet little child to any one of those old women! Why, the next news we got would be that she had been let roll down the cliff, or had fell into the sea! I should not like to risk it for a child of mine, ma'am."

"I must do something with her," said Madame Guise, setting her lips tightly. Give up her plan, she would not; she believed Heaven itself had aided her in it; but no one knew how much it cost her to part with this great treasure, her child. From the hour of its birth, it had never been away from her. The devotion of some French women to their children is as remarkable as the neglect of others.

"There's one thing you might do with her, ma'am, if you chose—and far better too than consigning her to any old nurse-woman."

"What is that?"

"Well, I'll take the liberty of suggesting it," cried Mrs. Bent. "Put her to the Grey Sisters."

"The Grey Sisters!" echoed Madame Guise, struck with the suggestion. "But would they take one so young, think you? A little child who can scarcely speak!"

"I think they'd take her and be glad of it. Why, ma'am, children are like playthings to them. They have the fishermen's children there by day to teach and train; and they keep 'em by night too when the little ones are sick."

No suggestion could have been more welcome to Madame Guise. The wonder was, that she had not herself thought of it: she no doubt would have done so had Marie been older. To put the matter at rest, she went over at once to the Nunnery. Sister Charlotte received her, and heard her proposal joyfully.

Admit a dear little child as a boarder amongst them! Yes, that they would; and take the most loving care of her; and train her, they hoped, to find the road to Heaven. They would be glad to have two or three little ones of the better class, no matter what the age; the bit of money paid for them would be an assistance, for the Sisterhood was but poor. Though, indeed, now that the new Sister, Mary Ursula—Miss Castlemaine—had joined them, they were better off.

"I am so glad to hear you say she may come," said Madame Guise. "I had feared that my little one was too young. She must have everything done for her, and she cannot speak plainly. English she does not speak at all, though she understands it."

"She will soon speak it with us: and we will try and make her quite happy. But I must summon our Superior," added Sister Charlotte, "for I may not take upon myself to decide this, though I know how welcome it will be."

The Superior came in, in the person of Miss Castlemaine. Alas, no longer to be called so—but Sister Mary Ursula. She swept in, in her silk mourning dress, and with the muslin cap shading her beautiful hair, and greeted Madame Guise with all her winning and gracious manner, holding out her hand in welcome. In some turn of the face, or in some glance of the eye—it was hard to define what—so strong a likeness to the lost and ill-fated Anthony momentarily shone out from Miss Castlemaine's countenance, that poor Madame Guise felt faint. But she had to control all feeling now; she had passed into another character and left herself out of sight behind.

Seated opposite to her, giving to her her best attention, her fine head gently bent, her soft, but brilliant eyes thrown upon her, Sister Mary Ursula listened to the story Madame Guise told. She had engaged herself as governess at Greylands' Rest, and wished to be allowed to place her child with the Grey Ladies.

"Is the situation at Greylands' Rest one that you think will suit you?—do you feel that it is what you will like to undertake?" Miss Castlemaine asked when the speaker paused.

"Yes, I do. I am very much pleased to have obtained it."

"Then I can only say that I hope you will be happy in it, and find it all you can wish. I am sure you will like my uncle. Your pupil, Miss Flora Castlemaine, is self-willed, and has been much indulged by her mother. You will be able, I trust, to bring her to better ways."

"And you will take my little girl, madam?"

"Certainly. It is very good of you to confide her to us."

"It is very good of you to agree to take her, madam. I am so glad! And how much shall I pay you for her? Say by the trimestre—the three months?"

Miss Castlemaine shook her head with a smile. "I have not been here long enough to act on my own judgment," she said: "upon all knotty points I consult Sister Mildred. We will let you know in the course of the day."

Madame Guise rose. But for the dreadful suspicion that lay upon her, the crime she was going out of her own character to track, she would have liked to throw herself into the arms of this gracious lady, and say with tears, "You are my husband's cousin. Oh, pity me, for I was Anthony's wife!" But it might not be. She had entered on her task and must pursue it.

And when a dainty little note in Sister Margaret's writing was brought over to the Dolphin in the evening by Sister Ann, Madame Guise found that the ladies had fixed a very small sum as payment for her child—four pounds the quarter, or sixteen pounds the year.

"Cent francs par trimestre," commented Madame Guise in her own language. "It is quite moderate: but Marie is but a little one."

The child went over on the following day. She was entered as Mademoiselle Marie Guise: Very much astonished would those good ladies have been had they known her true name to be that of their Superior—Mary Ursula Castlemaine! There was no fear of the child betraying secrets. She was a very *backward* child, not only in speech; she seemed to have forgotten all about her father, and she could not have told the name of her native place, where it was, or anything about it, if questioned ever so. Trouble was expected with her at the parting. Her mother was advised not to attempt to see her for some three or four days after she went over to the Nunnery; but rather to give her time to get reconciled to the change, and to this new abode.

It was cruel penance to the mother, this parting; worse than it could have been to the child. Madame Guise saw her at a distance on the following day, Sunday—for it happened to be Saturday that the child went in. The little church was filled at the three o'clock afternoon service, when Parson Marston gabbled through the prayers and the

sermon to the edification of his flock. Little Marie sat in the large pew with the Grey Ladies, between Sister Mary Ursula in her black attire, and Sister Betsey in her grey. The latter, who had a special love for children, had taken the little one under her particular charge. Marie was in black also : and a keen observer might have fancied there was some sort of likeness between her and the stately Head Sister beside her. The child looked happy and contented. To the scandal of the surrounders, no doubt far more to them than to that of the Parson himself, whose mouth widened with a laugh, she, happening to espy out her mother when they were standing up to say the Belief, extended her hands, called out "Maman ! maman !" and began to nod incessantly. Sister Betsey succeeded in restoring decorum.

Madame Guise sat with Mr. and Mrs. Bent, occupying the post of honour at the top of the pew. In the square, crimson-curtained pew pertaining to Greylands' Rest, sat the Master of Greylands and his family : his wife with a pinched face, for she had contrived to take cold ; Harry tall as himself, free and fascinating ; Flora staring about with the plaister patches on her face ; and Ethel Reese, devout, modest, lovely. They were all in black : the mourning worn for Mr. Peter Castlemaine. Their servants, also in mourning, occupied a pew behind that of the Grey Ladies. It might have been noticed that Mr. Castlemaine never once turned his head towards these ladies : he had never favoured them, and the step taken by his niece in joining their society had vexed him more materially than he would have liked to say. He had his private reasons for it : he had cause to wish those ladies' backs turned on Greylands ; but he had no power to urge their departure openly, or to send them by force away.

Very dull was poor Charlotte Guise all that Sunday evening. She would not meet the little one on coming out of church, but mixed with the people to avoid it. Her heart yearned to give a fond word, a tender kiss ; but so anxiously bent was she upon entering Greylands' Rest that she shrank from anything that might impede it, or imperil the child's stay at the Nunnery. After taking tea in her parlour, she sat awhile in her own room above ; indulging her sadness. It was sometimes worse than she well knew how to bear. She might not give way to grief, distress, anguish in the presence of the world ; that, might have betrayed her to suspicion ; but there were moments when alone that she yielded to it in all its bitterness. The fathomless sea, calm to-night, was spread out before her, grey and dull, for the rays of the setting sun had left it : did that sea cover the body of him whom she had loved more than life ? To her left rose the Friar's Keep—she could almost catch a glimpse of its dark walls, if she stretched her head well out at the casement : at any rate, she could see this end of the Grey Nunnery, and that was something. Did that Friar's Keep, with its dark tales, its superstitious stories—did that Keep contain the mystery ? She fully believed it did.

From the very first, the description of the building had seized on her mind, and left its dread there. It was *there* she must look for the traces of her husband's fate; perhaps even for himself. Yes, she believed that the grim walls covered him, not the heaving sea.

"Oh Anthony! my ill-fated, wronged husband!" she cried, raising her clasped hands upwards in her distress and speaking through her blinding tears, "may the good God help me to bring your fate to light!"

The shades of twilight were deepening. Fishermen with their wives and children were wending their way homewards after the Sunday evening's walk—the one walk taken together of the seven days. Two of the Grey Ladies came down from the cliff and went towards the Nunnery: Madame Guise, who by this time had made acquaintance with some of the inhabitants, wondered whether anybody was ill in the cottages. A good many dwellings were scattered on this side the cliff: some of them pretty commodious cottages, others mere huts.

Once more, as she stood there at the casement window, Charlotte Guise asked herself whether she was justified in thus entering Greylands' Rest under a false aspect—justified even by the circumstances. She had revolved the same question in her mind many times during the past few days, and the answer had always been, as it was now, in the affirmative. And she was of a straight-forward, honourable nature; although the reader may be disposed to judge the contrary. That Mr. Castlemaine had taken her husband's life; taken it in wilful malice and wickedness that he might retain his usurpation of Greylands' Rest, she did not entertain a shade of doubt of: she believed, religiously believed, that the mission of tracking out this crime was laid upon her by Heaven; and she did consider herself justified in taking any steps that might forward her in it; any steps in the world, overhanded or underhanded, short of doing injury to any innocent person. Her original resolve had been, merely to stay in the village, seek out what information she could, and wait; but the opportunity having been offered her in so singularly marked a manner (as she looked upon it) of becoming an inmate of Mr. Castlemaine's home, she could not hesitate in embracing it. And yet, though she never faltered in her course, though an angel from Heaven would hardly have stopped her entrance, believing, as she did, that the entrance had been specially opened for her, yet every now and again qualms of conscience pricked her sharply, and she hated the whole proceeding.

"But I cannot leave Anthony alone in the unknown grave," she would piteously tell herself at these moments. "And I can see no other way to discovery; and I have no help to aid me in it. If I entered upon the investigation openly, declaring who I am, that might be worse than fruitless: it would put Mr. Castlemaine on his guard; he is more clever than I, he has all power here, while I have none; and Anthony might

remain where he is, unavenged, for ever. No no, I must go on in my planned-out course."

The sea became more grey ; the evening star grew bright in the sky ; people had gone within their homes and the doors were shut. Madame Guise, tired with the wearily passing hours, sick and sad at her own reflections, put on her bonnet and warm mantle to take a bit of a stroll over to the beach. Mrs. Bent happened to meet her as she gained the passage below. The landlady was looking so unusually cross that Madame Guise noticed it.

"I have been giving a word of a sort to Mr. Harry Castlemaine," she explained, as they entered her sitting-room. "You be quiet, John Bent : what I see right to do, I shall do. Mr. Harry will go too far in that quarter if he does not mind."

"Young men like to talk to pretty girls all the world over ; they did in my time, I know, and they do in this," was John's peaceful answer, as he rose from his fire-side chair at his guest's entrance. "But I don't see, wife, that it's any good reason for your pouncing upon Mr. Harry and saying what you did, as he was going by to his home."

"Prevention's better than cure," observed Mrs. Bent, in a short tone. "As to young men liking to talk to pretty girls, that's all very well when they are equals in life ; but when it comes to a fisherman's daughter and a gentleman, it's a different thing."

"Jane Hallet's father was not a fisherman."

"He was not over much above it," retorted Mrs. Bent. "Because the Grey Sisters educated her and made much of her, would you exalt her into a lady?—you never had common sense, John Bent, and never will have. She is too pretty to be followed by Mr. Harry Castlemaine. Why, he must have been walking with her nearly ever since tea !"

"He intends no harm, Dorothy, I'll answer for it."

"Harm comes sometimes without intention, John Bent. Mr. Harry's as thoughtless and random as a March hare. I've seen what I have seen : and Jane Hallet had better keep herself in future out of his company."

"Well, your speaking to him did no good, wife. And it was not respectful."

"Good ! it's not likely it would do good with him," conceded Mrs. Bent. "He turns everything into laughter. Did you hear how he began about my Sunday cap, asking for the pattern of it, and setting Molly off in a grin ! She nearly dropped the scuttle of coals she was bringing in—good evening then, ma'am, for the present, if you are going for your little stroll."

Madame Guise, leaving her host and hostess to settle their difference, touching Mr. Harry Castlemaine, went over to the beach and walked about there. The shades grew deeper ; the stars came out brightly : night was upon the earth when she retraced her steps. ^{by Thinking of} little one, she did not go into the inn, but walked past the Grey

Nunnery : she knew she should not see the child, but it was a satisfaction only to look at the window of the room that contained her. Soon Madame Guise came to the gate of the chapel ruins ; and some impulse prompted her to open it and enter. But she first of all looked cautiously around to make sure she was not being watched : once let it be known that she held any particular interest in this place and her connection with him who had been last within it might be suspected. When we hold a dangerous secret, the conscience is more than sensitive : and Madame Guise was no exception.

She crossed over the ruins, and stood looking out on the sea, so grand from thence. After she had gazed her fill, she turned to the Friar's Keep, and made her way into it by the mouldering door in the once firm walls.

Oh, but it was dark here ! By what she could make out, when her sight got used to the gloom, she seemed to be amidst the arches of some pillared cloisters. While looking on this side and that side, striving to pierce their mysteries, taking a step this way and a step that, and trembling all the while lest she should see the revenant, said to haunt the place, a dreadful sound, like the huge fluttering of large wings arose above in the arches. Poor Charlotte Guise, superstitious by nature and education, and but young in years yet, was seized with a perfect acme of terror ; of terror too great to scream. Was it the spirit of her husband, striving to communicate with her, she thought—and oh blame her not too greatly. She had been reared in the fear of “revenants ;” she earnestly believed that the dead were sometimes permitted to revisit the earth. Silence supervened, and her terror grew somewhat less intense. “Is your grave here, Anthony ?” she murmured ; “are you buried in some corner of this lonesome place, away from the eye of man ? Oh, hear me while I repeat my vow to search out this dreadful mystery ! To the utmost of the power that circumstances and secrecy leave me, will I strive to find you, Anthony ; and bring home to Mr. Castlemaine——”

A worse noise than before ; an awful fluttering and flapping right above her head. She screamed out now, terrified nearly to death. The echoes repeated her scream, and the rushing wings, with another kind of scream, not half so shrill as hers, went out through the broken wall and flew across the sea. She felt just as though she were dropping into her grave. Was it the revenant of the place ?—or was it the revenant of her husband ?—*what* was it ? Lying there, her face prone against a column, Charlotte asked herself these dread questions : and never once, until her alarm was somewhat subsiding, did she think of what her reason might have shown her at first—that it was an owl, angry at its precincts being invaded : or perhaps some large sea-bird.

With her face white as death, and her limbs shaking as though in an ague fit, she made her way to the entrance gate again ; passed through it, and so got away from the Friar's Keep.

CHAPTER XV.

AT GREYLANDS' REST.

"Non, mademoiselle, je n'en veux pas."

"Because Ethel understands French as well as you do, that's no reason why I should. If you tell me in French what I have to do, of course I can't do it, for I don't know a word you say."

It was the first morning of the studies, Tuesday, Madame Guise having entered the previous day. She, Ethel, and Flora were seated round the table in the schoolroom, a small apartment looking to the kitchen-garden, with an old carpet on its floor, painted segged chairs, and a square piano against the wall opposite the fire. Ethel was copying music. Madame Guise was endeavouring to ascertain the advancement of Miss Flora in her studies, with a view to arranging their course in future, and was requiring her to answer in French.

"Whatever you do, Madame Guise, please speak *always* to Flora in French," had been Mrs. Castlemaine's first charge to the new governess. "Above all things, I wish her to be a good French scholar, and to speak it as fluently as Miss Reene does." But here, at the very outset, Miss Flora was demurring to the French, and protesting she could not understand it.

Madame Guise hesitated. She did not choose to be met by wilful disobedience; on the other hand, to issue her mandates in an unknown language would be simply waste of time. She turned her eyes questioningly on Ethel.

"I am not quite sure, madame, one way or the other," said Ethel, replying in French. "Flora ought to be able to understand it; but she has always been inattentive, and perhaps she does not. Miss Oldham and the governesses who preceded her did not speak French as you do: perhaps they were not particular that Flora should speak it."

"How is it that you speak it so well?" asked Madame.

"I? Oh, I had a French nurse when I was a child, and then a French governess; and to finish my education I went to Paris for two years."

"All the three governesses I have had here did not speak French to me," interrupted Flora, resentfully. "Not one of them."

"Have you had three governesses? That is a great many, considering you are yet young," observed Madame.

"They were all bad ones," said the girl.

"Or was it that you were a bad pupil? You must be a better one with me."

Ethel's shapely head, with its bright dark hair, was bent over her copying again: she said nothing. Madame Guise determined to speak in English to the child for at least this morning, until the studies should be put in train.

"We will begin with your English grammar"—taking up the dog-eared, untidy book. "How far are you in it, Miss Flora?"

"I don't like grammar."

"How far are you in it?" equably pursued Madame.

"I don't recollect."

"To begin English grammar again," spoke Madame, addressing herself, and making a note on paper with a pencil.

"I shan't begin it again."

"You will not say to me I shall or I sha'n't; you will do what I please," quietly corrected Madame. "This is your English history. What reign are you in?"

Miss Flora had her elbows on the table, her hands under her chin, and her pretty face pushed out defiantly opposite Madame. The patches of plaister were nearly all gone; her light curls, tied back with black ribbon, hung low behind. She wore a black frock and white pinafore.

"Which of the kings' reigns are you in?" pursued Madame.

"Not in any. I know them all. Charles the Second was beheaded; and Henry the Eighth had ten wives: and Guy Faux blew up the gunpowder plot; and Elizabeth boxed people's ears."

"Oh," said Madame, "I think we shall have to begin *that* again. Are you good at spelling?"

"I can't spell at all. I hate it. Mamma says I need not learn to spell."

"I fancy that cannot be true. How will you write letters if you cannot spell?"

"Who wants to write letters?—I don't."

"Flora!" put in Ethel in a warning tone.

The girl turned angrily on Ethel. "Nobody asked *you* to speak: mind your copying."

"Mind your manners," said Ethel, nodding to her.

"Not for you, or for anybody else in this room."

"It is very unpleasant to hear young ladies say these rude things," interposed Madame. "As your governess, Miss Flora, I shall not permit it."

"That's what my other governesses would say," retorted Flora. "It made no difference to me."

"If the other governesses did not do their duty by you, it is no reason why I should not do mine," said Madame. "Your papa has charged me with forming your manners: if I have trouble in doing it I am to appeal to him."

Flora was silent. The one only will she feared, in the house or out of it, was her father's. *He* would not be trifled with, however her mother might be.

"I hate governesses, Madame Guise. I'd like to know what they were invented for."

"To teach ignorant and refractory children to become good young ladies," spoke Madame, who did not seem in the least to lose her temper. Flora did not like the calmness : it augured badly for the future.

"I drove my other governesses away, and I'll drive you. I'll never do anything you tell me. I won't learn and I won't practise."

"The less you learn, the more persistently I will stay on to make you," said Madame, quite unruffled. "A lesson that you do not get by heart to-day, you will have to get to-morrow : the studies broken off this week, must be completed next. As to your trying to drive me away, it will be labour lost ; I simply tell you I am not to be driven. If there is anything I like, and for which I think I have an especial fitness, it is that of ruling refractory children. We shall see which will be strongest, Miss Flora, you or I."

"Once, when one of my governesses wanted to *make* me learn, I had a fever. Mamma said it was all her fault."

"Very good," said Madame. "We will risk the fever. If you get one I will nurse you through it. I am a capital nurse."

Ethel burst out laughing. "The fever was a headache, Flora ; you brought it on with crying."

"You ugly story-teller ! I did have a fever. I lay in bed and had broth."

"Yes, for a day. Why, you have never had a fever in your life. Mr. Parker came and brought some medicine ; you would not take it and got up."

"Ugh ! you old tell-tale !"

"Come to my side, Miss Flora," spoke Madame. "You will stand here and read a little of French and of English that I may see how you read. And I must tell you that if we have not got through this morning what we want to get through and put the studies en train, I shall not allow you to go out this afternoon, and I shall request that you may have no dinner. Instead of that, you will stay in this room with me. Mind ! I never break my word."

After a few moments' delay, the young lady moved round. Probably she saw that her new mistress was *not* one to break her word. And, thus, a beginning made, the morning wore away rather better than its commencement had promised. Never was there a child with better abilities than Flora Castlemaine : it was only the will to use them that was lacking.

Putting aside the difficulties attending the instruction and management of Miss Flora, Madame Guise found the residence at Greylands' Rest not at all an unpleasant one. The routine of the day was this. Breakfast—which meal was taken all together in the red parlour—at eight o'clock. Flora until dinner-time ; half past one. Ethel's music lesson of an hour, was given during the afternoon : Flora being generally out with her mamma, or racing about the premises and grounds on her

own account. Tea at five : one hour given to Flora afterwards, to help her to prepare her lessons or exercises for the following day : and then Madame's duties were over.

Little did Mr. Castlemaine imagine that the pleasant, though always sad young lady, who was so efficient an instructress for the young plague of the house, was his ill-fated nephew's widow. He was somewhat taken aback when he heard that Madame Guise had placed her child at the Grey Nunnery, and knitted his brow in displeasure. However, the child's being there, so long as the ladies were, could make no difference to him : it was the Sisterhood he wanted away, not the child.

Charlotte Guise never went out during the day—except on Sundays, to church. Ethel would try to coax her abroad in the afternoons, but hitherto she had not succeeded. In the evening, after Flora was done with, Madame would put her bonnet on and stroll out alone : sometimes to the Nunnery to see her child, whose enforced absence only made her the dearer to her mother's heart.

"Why will you not go out with me?" asked Ethel one afternoon, when she and Madame Guise rose from the piano in the red parlour—for the old square piano in the school-room was for the benefit of the unskilled fingers of Miss Flora only. "See how pleasant every thing looks ! It is quite spring weather now."

"Yes it is spring weather, but I feel a little cold always, and I don't care to go," answered Madame Guise. "I will go when summer comes."

They sat down before the French window, Ethel opening it to the pleasant air. Madame Guise had been wishing ever since she was in the house to put a question to this fair young girl, whom she had already learned to love. But she had not yet dared to do it : her conscience was always suggesting fears of her true identity being discovered : and now that she did speak it was abruptly.

"Have any tidings been heard yet of the young man said to have been lost in the Friar's Keep?"

"No, not any."

"Is it true, think you, that he was killed?"

Ethel Reene flushed painfully : she could not forget what she had overheard John Bent say.

"Oh, I hope not. Of course, his disappearance is very strange, more than strange : but if—if anything did happen to him that night it must have been by accident."

"I heard about the matter when I was at the Dolphin," observed Madame Guise, as if wishing to account for speaking of it. "It took much hold upon my interest ; it seemed so strange and sad. Did you ever see that Mr. Anthony, Ethel?"

"Yes, I saw him twice. I was prejudiced against him at first, but I grew to like him. I should have liked him very much had he lived ; I

am sure of it; quite as a brother. Miss Castlemaine liked him : and I think the mystery of his loss has lain heavily upon her."

"What prejudiced you against him?" asked Charlotte.

Ethel smiled, and told the tale. She gave the history of their two meetings; gave it in detail. The tongue is ready when it has a sympathetic hearer; never a more wrapt one than she who listened now. Ethel rose as she concluded it. The disappearance was a subject she did not care to dwell upon.

"Then you will not come out with me, madame?"

"Many thanks, but no."

"What will you do with yourself all day to-morrow?" asked Ethel.

"I shall take holiday," replied Madame Guise.

For on the morrow the whole of the family were going from home, having promised to spend the day with some friends who lived near Newerton.

True, Charlotte Guise would take holiday on the morrow from her duties; that went as a matter of course; but she was purposing to use the day, or part of it, in endeavouring to make some discovery. These twelve days had she been in the house now, and she was no farther advanced than when she entered it. She had seen Mr. Castlemaine daily; she had conversed with him, dined and taken other meals in his company; but for all the enlightenment she had gathered of the doings of that ill-fated February night, he and she might as well have been far apart as are the two poles. It was not by going on in this tame way that she could hope to obtain any clue to the past: and she had made a vow to devote herself to the task.

The morning rose brightly, and the family went off after breakfast in the carriage, Harry sitting on the box with the coachman. Madame Guise was left alone.

A feverish desire had been upon her to enter Mr. Castlemaine's room upstairs; the study where he kept the accounts pertaining to his estate, and wrote his letters. In this room he passed many hours daily, sitting in it sometimes late into the night. Charlotte Guise held an impression that if she could find tokens or records of her lost husband, it would be there. But she had never yet obtained so much as a glimpse of its interior: the room was considered sacred to Mr. Castlemaine, and the family did not approach it.

Two or three of the women servants had obtained permission to absent themselves that day, and the house was comparatively deserted. Madame Guise, looking forth from her chamber, found all silent and still: the upstairs work was over, the servants, those who remained at home, were shut up in the remote kitchens. Now was her time; now, if ever.

The corridor was spacious. It ran along two sides of the house, and most of the bed chambers opened from it. Mr. Castlemaine's

study was the middle room in the side corridor ; Madame's bedroom was nearly opposite the room, beyond hers being Harry Castlemaine's.

Standing outside her door with a flushed face and panting breath in the silence, not liking the work she was about to do, but believing it a necessity thrown upon her, she at length softly crossed the corridor and opened the outer door leading to the study. A short, dark, narrow passage not much more than a yard in length, and there was another door. This was locked, but the key was in it ; she turned the key, and entered the room. Entered it with a shock of disappointment, for it was bare and empty.

We are all apt to form ideas of places and things as yet unseen. The picture in Charlotte Guise's mind had been of a spacious apartment filled with furniture, littered with papers. What she saw was a small square room, and no earthly thing in it, papers or else, but a table, some chairs, and a bureau against the wall : or what would have been called in her own land a large *secrétaire*, or office desk. She gazed around her with a blank face.

The table and chairs were bare : no opportunity there for anything concealed. The bureau was locked. She tried it ; pulled it, pushed it : but the closed-down lid was firm as adamant.

"If there exists any record of him, it is in here," she said, 'half aloud. "I must contrive means of opening it."

She could not do it that day. It would have to be done with a false key, she supposed ; and, that, she had not in her possession. Before quitting the room, she approached the window, and looked forth cautiously at the sea rolling in the distance ; at the Friar's Keep opposite ; at the fair green lands lying between that and Greylands' Rest. Charlotte Guise shuddered at a thought that crossed her.

"If he did indeed kill my poor husband and has laid him to rest in the Friar's Keep, how can he bear to be in this room, with that building in front to remind him of the deed ?"

The day was before her : it was not yet twelve o'clock. Blankly disappointed with her failure, a thought struck her that she would go to Stilborough, telling Miles she should not be in to dinner. She wanted to make some purchases ; for the wardrobe brought over from France had not been extensive, either for herself or child.

And so, just as Anthony Castlemaine had once, and but once, set off to walk to the market-town, did his poor young wife—nay, his widow—set off now. She was a good walker, and, so far, enjoyed the journey and the sweet spring day. She saw the same objects of interest (or of non-interest as people might estimate them) that he had seen : the tall, fine trees, now budding into life ; the country carts and waggons ; the clumsy milestones ; the two or three farm houses lying back amid their barns and orchards. Thus she reached Stilborough.

When she got back to Greylands it was five o'clock, and she was

dead tired. Mrs. Bent, standing at the inn door, saw her, brought her in, and set her down to a substantial tea-table. She told the landlady she had been to Stilborough to make purchases—which would be sent by coach on the morrow, and left for her at the Dolphin.

"Ned shall take the parcels up to Greylands' Rest," said Mrs. Bent.

What with the welcome rest to her tired limbs, and what with Mrs. Bent's hospitable gossip, Madame Guise sat longer than she had intended. It was nearly dark when she went over to the Nunnery—for she had brought a toy and some bon-bons for Marie. The Grey Sisters received her as kindly as usual; but they told her the little one did not seem very well, and Madame Guise went up.

Marie was in her little bed by the side of Sister Betsey's. She seemed restless and feverish. Poor Charlotte Guise began to think that perhaps this climate did not agree with her so well as her own. Taking off her things, she sat down to stay with the child.

"Mrs. Castlemaine said it would be quite midnight before they got home, as they were to make a very long day, so I am in no hurry for an hour or two," she observed. "Miles will think I am lost; but I will tell him how it is."

"Has your little one ever had the measles?" asked Sister Mona.

"The measles?" repeated Madame Guise, puzzled for the moment. "Oh, les rougeoles—pardon my forgetfulness—no, she has not. She has never had anything."

"Then I think—I am not sure—she is sickening for the measles now."

"Mon Dieu!" cried the mother in consternation.

"It is nothing," said the Sister. "We have nursed dozens of children, and brought them well through it. In a week little Marie will be about again."

But Madame Guise, unused to these light ailments, and terribly anxious for her only child, whom she could but look upon, as separated from her, in the light of a martyr, was not easily reassured. She stayed with the child as long as she dared, and begged that Mr. Parker might be sent for in the morning if Marie was no better.

It was late to go home; after eleven; but nevertheless she took the lonely road past the Friar's Keep and up Chapel Lane. The way had a fascination for her. Since she had been at Greylands' Rest, in going home from the Nunnery in the evening, she had always chosen it. All the village had long ago been in bed. The stars were bright; the night was light and clear. Looking across over the chapel ruins, she could see the light of a distant vessel out at sea. Under the hedge, in the very self-same spot where her husband and John Bent had halted that fatal night, did she now halt, the Chapel Lane close upon her left hand.

"No, they would not have been mistaken," ran her thoughts. "If

Mr. Castlemaine came down the lane now and crossed over, I should know him unmistakably—and that night was lighter than this, almost like day, for the moon, they say, was never brighter. Then why, unless he were guilty, should Mr. Castlemaine deny that he was there?"

Glancing up at the windows with a shudder, almost fearing she might see the revenant of the Grey Monk pass them with his lamp, or some other revenant, Madame Guise turned up Chapel Lane. At such moments, trifles serve to unstring the nerves of a timorous woman. Sounds struck on Madame Guise's ear, and she drew back, trembling and shaking, amid the thick grove of shrubs and trees, skirting one side of the lane.

"Gently, now ; gently, Bess," cried a voice not far from her. "You shall go your own pace in less than five minutes, old girl. Gently now."

And to Charlotte Guise's astonishment, she saw Commodore Teague come out of the dark turning that led to his Hutt, driving his spring cart. Its cover looked white in the starlight ; Bess, the mare he thought so much of, had her best harness on. When nearly abreast of Madame Guise, the Commodore pulled up with an exclamation.

"The devil take it ! I've forgot to lock the shed door. Stand still old girl ; stand still, Bess."

He got down and ran back. The well trained animal stood perfectly still. In a few moments' time he was back again, had mounted, and was driving slowly away in the direction of Newerton.

"What can be taking him abroad at this night hour ?" she said to herself in wonder.

But the encounter, though it had been a silent one, and on the man's part unsuspected, had served to restore somewhat of her courage : the proximity of a human being is so re-assuring in the dark and lonely night. And with a swift step, Charlotte Guise proceeded on her way up Chapel Lane.

(To be continued.)



AMOR MUNDI.

[Reprinted.]

“ Oh, where are you going with your love-locks flowing
On the west wind blowing along this valley track ? ”

“ The downhill path is easy, come with me an' it please ye,
We shall escape the uphill by never turning back.”

So they two went together in glowing August weather,
The honey-breathing heather lay to their left and right ;
And dear she was to doat on, her swift feet seemed to float on
The air, like soft twin pigeons too sportive to alight.

“ Oh, what is that in heaven where grey cloud-flakes are seven,
Where blackest clouds hang riven just at the rainy skirt ? ”

“ Oh, that's a meteor sent us, a message, dumb, portentous,
An undeciphered, solemn signal of help or hurt.”

“ Oh, what is that glides quickly where velvet flowers grow thickly,
Their scent comes rich and sickly ? ”—“ A scaled and hooded worm.”

“ Oh, what's that in the hollow, so pale I quake to follow ? ”

“ Oh, that's a thin dead body which waits the eternal term.”

“ Turn again, O my sweetest, turn again false and fleetest :
This way whereof thou weetest I fear is hell's own track.”

“ Nay, too steep for hill-mounting, nay, too late for cost counting :
This downhill path is easy, but there's no turning back.”

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

ON THE VALUE OF THE RARE.

“FAMILIARITY breeds contempt,” is an old and well-worn adage ; so old and well-worn as to have itself fallen into contempt. We are accustomed to smile somewhat derisively at these trite sayings, as only fit for copy-books. But is this because they have ceased to be true ? Or is it not rather that a truth presented to us constantly under the same aspect, becomes commonplace, and is consequently little regarded ?

It seems but a senseless ambition to be the possessor of objects, valuable solely on account of their rarity, independently of any other quality intrinsic or extrinsic. A unique copy of an utterly valueless book, a coin throwing no light upon history or art, a hideous piece of china that has happened fortunately never to have been reproduced—these may be but the whimsical fancies of a collector. Nevertheless, in rarity lies a certain value. The word “rare,” not only means scarce, uncommon, but also excellent, incomparable ; and the two meanings are not so dissimilar as would at the first glance appear.

However humiliating the fact may be, it is undoubtedly the case, that the strange, forms one great element of beauty. We have to be surprised into admiration ; and if we think of it, this word is also convertible. As Smith says in his *Essays*, “Wonder, surprise, and admiration, are words which, though often confounded, denote in our language sentiments that are indeed allied.” That which excites admiration in any high degree, must also excite wonder—that is to say, in other words, must be raised above the dead level of commonplace.

Nature acts upon this law. As if aware of the dulling of our perceptions through too constant use, she is niggardly of her most splendid effects. Ought we to require anything more exquisite than the sights we have daily before our eyes : the pale blue sky with its fleecy cloudlets, or rounded masses of cumulus, the fresh green of the fields, the lovely forms of the ordinary weeds by the hedge-side, the waving foliage of the trees as the wind whispers through their branches ? But simply because they are constantly before us we give no heed to them ; we require the sky to be of deeper blue, the clouds to be piled in stormy grandeur, or bathed in the glory of the setting sun, the trees to be of giant growth, before we are surprised into the exclamation, How beautiful ! “This air we breathe is so common, we care not for it ;” says Burton in his “*Anatomy of Melancholy*.”

Nature sets us the example of being chary of ornament. For a short time in spring she scatters her gay colours over the earth with

lavish hand. The fields are golden with buttercups ; and in the woods is spread an azure carpet of hyacinths. In the autumn, again, mountain and heath glow in hues of amber and purple, the trees don a many tinted raiment ; but soon all this is snatched away, before our eyes have time to weary. It is but a glimpse of brightness that is permitted to us, and then the needful change.

Thus decoration should be sparingly used. The most exquisite combinations of form and colour become commonplace and cease to appeal to our feeling for the beautiful, if they are allowed to weary by constant repetition. Simplicity, harmoniousness, quietude, should prevail in our ordinary surroundings ; elaborate ornament being always the exception.

In literature the same rule holds good. The poet, or even prose writer, if he would excite emotion in his readers, or rouse their intellectual activity, must avoid commonplace, and must bear in mind that the choicest expressions, the most finely turned phrases, lose their charm by too frequent repetition. It is related of a countryman that after seeing Hamlet performed, he declared himself disappointed. " It was a fine play," he said, " certainly ; but there were too many quotations." Who does not sympathize with the poor man, and feel that many a tragic or pathetic scene is almost marred from some phrase, or some line having been dinned into our ears, until it has become utterly commonplace, if not absurd ? Who cares to be told now, that " a rose by any other name would smell as sweet ? " Or that " a custom may be more honour'd in the breach than the observance ? " Who can forbear a smile when the lines occur ?

Notwithstanding the tasteless and pedantic manner in which quotations and familiar sayings in foreign languages are too frequently introduced in writing or speaking, the desire to escape by any means from the commonplace may justify their occasional use. Even the quaintness of the Scotch or Irish dialect may catch the ear and arrest the attention, where the same sentiment expressed in ordinary English would be unheedingly passed over.

Satiety is one of the greatest evils of life. As it has been said in ancient times, the power of admiring was the greatest blessing bestowed on mankind. The habitual tourist, year by year visiting Italy, Switzerland, the Rhine, or wherever his fancy may lead him, ceases to find delight in vine-clad hills, or snowy mountains, or castled crags. He hurries past lovely scenes with which he has become too familiar, and seeks to reawaken his dormant sense of wonder, and with that his appreciation of the beautiful.

How different is it with the weary labourer at the desk or in the workshop, or the professional man worn with toil of brain, when for a few short weeks, he is enabled to cast care behind him, and Antæus-like recruit his exhausted energies by contact with his mother Earth.

What glories he finds in her presence! what exceeding beauty is revealed to him in sea, and mountain, and woodland! what rapture in the unaccustomed sense of freedom! His sensations are not dulled by satiety. He enjoys vividly what to him is rare.

Much is said about the dissemination of taste by the multiplication of beautiful things; and to a certain extent this is desirable. But even good taste may be purchased at too high a price, and there is a danger that if we do not keep our beautiful things rare, we shall vulgarize them, and cease to perceive their beauty altogether. Chromolithography and heliography, and casts, and even pastes and scaglioli, and other means of producing copies and other imitations, ought no doubt to be cordially welcomed, as enabling much of beauty that was formerly confined to the palace, to be enjoyed in the cottage. But do we really value much the picture we see repeated in every shop-window? Do we care for a statue, or a vase, or an ornament, that is thrust before our eyes at every turn through the medium of innumerable copies and imitations?

Nor is this tendency to satiety a subject for regret or blame. We are so constituted both as regards our minds and our outward senses, as to be unable to bear any long continued strain. As the eye may gaze upon a colour until it appears faded, and in order to see it again in its brilliancy, the eye must be allowed to rest awhile upon an opposite tint, so the mind requires change, if its perceptions are not to become blunted. In Lessing's celebrated essay known as the "Laocoon," the following passage occurs, speaking of La Mettrie, who had his portrait taken as a second Democritus: "The first time the picture is seen it seems to laugh; but frequently contemplated, the philosopher becomes a buffoon, and the laugh, a grin."

To this law of our nature much of the neglect in England of what is called high art, may be traced. We do not turn our churches into picture-galleries, neither have the majority of picture-buyers galleries of their own. Pictures are purchased to be hung in the ordinary living-rooms of the family, and it is true instinct, perhaps, quite as much as acquired taste, that leads to the choice of simple subjects, adding to the cheerfulness of the room, while requiring no great mental effort in the beholder.

Suppose, however, these sunny landscapes, and breezy sea-pieces, and scenes from domestic life removed, and in their stead, place, say Guido's Martyrdom of St. Sebastian, Rubens' Descent from the Cross, or Rafaele's St. Cecilia, either the continued strain upon the faculties tuned to their highest pitch by the constant contemplation of these noblest works of art, would become unendurable, or we should lose by too great familiarity all sense of their grandeur. A fortunate possessor of a valuable picture, not unfrequently draws a curtain before it, or, if small, places it in a case, to preserve it, he says; and he does preserve

it in two senses: for, by allowing himself only an 'occasional contemplation of its beauties, he retains the freshness of feeling, the warm delight, with which he first viewed the treasure he has made his own. Great wisdom lies in that curtain, great value in beauty not habitually disclosed.

The rare is no less precious in another aspect. Much of what we understand by fascination of manner depends on variety. Shakspeare gave this crowning grace to his Cleopatra.

"Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
Her infinite variety."

The constant, set smile becomes, after a time, quite as wearisome as the downward aspect of melancholy. The soft, smooth speech of the habitually complaisant, as tedious as the prosing of the grumbler. It is the rare smile, flashing like a sudden gleam of sunlight over the thoughtful countenance, the tender shadow as from an April cloud, darkening the aspect for a moment and then passing away, that allures the bright, elastic Spirit, lending itself with ready adaptability to every good and every emotion, that charms. To refer again to Lessing, he defines the charming as the "transitory beautiful," that we wish to see repeated. "It comes and goes," he says, "and as what gives us the idea of movement impresses us more easily and in a more lively manner than mere form and colour, so, by the same rule, must the charming affect us more strongly than the beautiful."



BEATRIX.

"IF it is those social nuisances called Tableaux Vivants you are about to discuss, I think it is high time for me to abscond," said Curzon, raising himself indolently from his stooping position. His mother's lap-dog lay before the blazing fire dozing under the influence of its grateful warmth, and his mother's son had been employing himself idly for the last ten minutes in making the doze as unpleasant as it well could be.

"Well, if you *are* going, go at once," Felicia exclaimed, raising her handsome, impatient blue eyes from the written list she was studying. "Certainly, in any affair of this kind, Curzon, your absence is generally an intense relief."

"Thank you; your words are ever tipped with honey, especially when addressed to me," her cousin answered, as he lounged lazily towards the door, his hands thrust into the pockets of his morning-coat. Arrived there, he paused irresolutely. "If you would like to make any use of me, you know, you *can*," he remarked, with rather grand condescension. 'It is only the everlasting suggestions and counterplottings I object o. Shall I be 'Douglas' to your 'Annie Laurie,' eh?'"

"Can't," Felicia answered, growing faintly pink. "Captain Dudley has chosen that part."

"I wouldn't doubt him," said Curzon, without the faintest spark of interest animating his voice. "He was always an interfering individual. Well, then, may I be 'Hugh' to Miss Trixie's 'Dolly Varden?'"

"Late again," Beatrix exclaimed, in her clear, musical voice, coming out from her corner with a pretty show of excitement. "You should have asked me all these important questions before. Frank Warburton has begged to attend me on this occasion, and you can fancy what a very magnificent Hugh *he* will make."

Curzon leant against the side of the door, and regarded her curiously for a moment.

"Magnificent indeed," he said, slowly, "with his beautiful masses of crimson hair and his gigantic, ill-shaped limbs. Is this interesting 'Hugh' to hold you in his arms?"

"Won't it be capital fun?" exclaimed Beatrix, with a laugh of irrepressible amusement. "It is that scene where 'Hugh' runs away with 'Dolly,' you know. Frank wanted, right or wrong, to run away with *me* too; but Felicia and I thought it would scarcely answer off the stage I mean, of course," concluded Miss Falkland mischievously.

"Let me see," Felicia broke in abstractedly, running her white finger

up and down the list—" 'Mary of Scotland,' 'Court of Queen Anne,' 'Betsy Prig,' 'Cin-der—' Oh *here* is a scene not yet settled; your picture of 'The Huguenots,' you remember, Beatrix. I suppose you can be the man there if you wish it, Curzon?"

"I *do* wish it," Curzon said, hurriedly for him; "that is, if Miss Falkland will have me."

"Very good; I do not mind. But you will have to look your very best, you know, as I cannot have my picture spoiled," Beatrix returned, carelessly. And, having promised to look unspeakably handsome, Curzon left them to their own devices.

Felicia Rawdon and Curzon, Lord Stainer, were engaged to be married, and had been so ever since her sixteenth birthday; and she was now in her twenty-second year. They were cousins, and, being both young, rich, and handsome, everybody came to the satisfactory conclusion that a marriage was the most correct thing that could be arranged between them. As to the young couple themselves, it cannot be said that they were unwilling or in any wise indisposed towards each other. Curzon—five years his cousin's senior—had some vague ideas about matrimony, principally to the effect that *sometime* in the course of his existence it would be necessary for him to get a mistress for his house, to settle down, to take an interest in farming, and so become a respectable member of society; and Felicia, being tall, stately, and fair-haired, seemed to his careless eyes to be the properest person going to meet these far-off designs. Miss Rawdon herself was much too well bred and well educated to have any idea or will of her own on such a subject at sixteen, beyond the expressed wills of her guardians, one of whom was Lady Stainer, her aunt and Curzon's mother.

The consequence would have been a marriage in this instance, I have no doubt, but for two things that happened almost simultaneously. Felicia Rawdon went to London about a year before my story opens, and met there a certain Captain Dudley, of the Dragoon Guards, who suddenly and most opportunely recollected that he had cousins residing somewhere in the vicinity of Stainer Park: and Beatrix Falkland came to live with her aunt, Miss Dorothy, at Fenton.

Beatrix Falkland differed from Felicia Rawdon in every possible way under the sun. She was small, dark, piquante, and wonderfully restless. Her education had been carried on in France, from which country—having attained her eighteenth year—she had come to Fenton to take her aunt's and everybody else's heart by storm. Even Miss Rawdon, in her usual grand manner, adopted the little gipsy on the spot as her own especial friend; while Lady Stainer, secure in her son's engagement to Felicia, made much of the girl who was doomed to ruin all her hopes and plans.

I am ashamed to have to confess it of my heroine, but Miss Trixie as she was generally called, was a flirt. She danced, laughed, and

sang indiscriminately with all her admirers. I have seen her myself, at a garden-party given by my Lady Stanbury, bestow the half of a pretty piece of forget-me-not on young Warburton, with a slyly worded promise to reserve the other half as sacred to herself for evermore ; and scarcely fifteen minutes afterwards I beheld, to my utter astonishment, being old-fashioned and holding ancient opinions upon certain subjects, that very selfsame treasured flower adorning the coat of George Weston of the Grange. I remember trying to feel angry with her upon that occasion, and failing miserably, the child having a way of her own that was perfectly irresistible.

She was gay, fanciful, mischievous, which, of course, was the very reason that Curzon, being an extremely sweet-tempered, well-bred, indolent young man, fell head over ears in love with her. This he did with his eyes open, of his own free will, as Beatrix gave him no encouragement whatever to break his troth, being thoroughly aware of his engagement to Felicia Rawdon.

Miss Dorothy Falkland was tall, slender, aristocratic, and had attained her sixtieth year. She prided herself on her birth, her exquisite hands and feet, and her unapproachable French fowl. She had eyes of the sweetest, darkest grey, with magnificent soft white hair, a kindly, well-bred old face, and a carriage that would have sent any posture-master into feelings of delight. Such was Miss Dorothy Falkland ; and a more attractive old lady it would have been impossible to meet with.

The Stainer Tableaux were a very great success, everybody being charmed with the novelty of the arrangements. Even old Lady Stanbury, who was generally acknowledged to be the most uncompromising of sneerers and scandalmongers—in fact a modern female Thersites—an Egyptian mummy at all the feasts in the neighbourhood—was pleased on this occasion to compliment Lady Stainer openly on the extreme beauty both of the performers and their dresses, until Mrs. Blount of the Hall, who was within hearing, was ready to die of envy—which, perhaps, was the very reason why her ladyship did it.

The theatricals were succeeded by a ball, and all the performers had rooms assigned them at Stainers, where they retired, once their parts were ended for the night, to array themselves in modern evening costume for the remainder of the entertainment. Miss Falkland having dressed herself to her own entire satisfaction, with the help of Lady Stainer's maid, in black silk, floating tulle, and scarlet flowers, went into Felicia's bed-room, where she found that young lady alone, very busily employed endeavouring to darken her eyebrows with the help of a little cosmetique. Seeing Trixie she murmured " Oh," and then went calmly on with her occupation.

" What in the world are you doing ? " inquired Beatrix, standing on tip-toe, and staring curiously over her companion's white shoulder into the looking-glass.

"Giving some colour to my eyebrows; they are so provokingly destitute of any," explained Felicia, in a rather injured tone.

"Dear me," said Trixie. "How very nice it *does* make you look. Do you think, now, if I—just a little bit, you know—eh?" gingerly applying the beautifier as she spoke to as exquisitely pencilled a pair of brows as anyone need wish to have.

"There, that is enough; take care Trixie—not *too* much you know," Miss Rawdon said anxiously, putting her head on one side, and superintending the effect with great empressement. "You scarcely need it all, you see, my dear; not like *me*, who am so light. Now turn round and let me look at you—all in black, with scarlet roses?—Well it is very becoming to your style, which, of course, is everything. And I—how do I look?"

"Delicious," Beatrice exclaimed, gazing at her friend with open admiration. "My dear Felicia, what a charming neck and arms you have, and how you do become white satin."

Miss Rawdon laughed. "Yes, I think I am looking very well," she said gazing complacently at her splendid soft white self in the tall, old-fashioned glass behind her. "I hope" (with a little sigh) "everybody else will think so. I believe you and I, Trixie, will be the handsomest in the room to-night."

"Oh, say yourself at once, Felicia," said Miss Falkland, with affected encouragement in her tone. "You really think too little of yourself, and modesty, these days, is a wretched mistake. You know very well there is not a girl downstairs could hold a candle to you."

"Very well, then, according to *your* judgment, I *will* be the handsomest here to-night," Felicia returned gaily; "and you will be the next. Does my train hang gracefully, Trixie? You are ever so much more to be admired than Laura Santly, in my eyes; her mouth is so enormous, and she is so wanting in refinement, poor girl."

"Yes, she certainly does lack that repose which marked the Vere de Veres," Miss Falkland said, with a light laugh. "I am not afraid of her, at all events, being happy in the knowledge that I am five times as good looking. But come, Felicia, come my dear; if you lingered before the glass for another hour, you could not be lovelier, and all the people are waiting for us." Which conversation just shows how young ladies really value themselves, and how candidly they confess it within the sacred precincts of their own rooms.

"Miss Trixie, may I have the pleasure of this dance? I fancy you are not engaged." It was Curzon who spoke, somewhere about the middle of the evening, and Miss Falkland turned and slipped her hand acquiescingly within his arm.

"You are right for once," she said, and they moved away to the music of the "Soldaten-lieder."

"You do not dance at all badly," Lord Stainer said presently, in a
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rather provoking tone: the fact of the matter being that Beatrix danced to perfection, and, what was more, knew she did.

"How good of you to say so," she murmured, raising her eyes to his with demure modesty. "I daresay, with a little practice, by and by, I shall do better." Whereupon they both laughed and passed out on to one of the balconies that overlooked the garden. It was a delicious night, all moon, and stars, and pale blue light.

"What a dancer that fellow is," Stainer said, in a moment or so, glancing over his shoulder superciliously back again into the room they had just quitted.

"Who? Mr. Warburton? On the contrary, he is the most charming dancer," protested Miss Falkland, with raised eyebrows. "He keeps one so clear of the frantic men, and holds one so—so—comfortably," she went on, with the most unsuspecting air in the world.

"Does he?" cried Curzon, unamiably, with a glance of boiling hatred directed towards the unconscious Warburton, who was smiling sweetly at an idiotic-looking girl in the distance. "I hope he held you *comfortably* during that ridiculous Tableau this evening, Miss Trixie" (sentimentally this). "I would give a good deal to know for certain whether you like my dancing, or my manner of holding you, or—myself at all."

"Of course I like you; why should not I?" Beatrix answered coolly. "What absurd questions you ask. By the bye, how extremely beautiful Felicia is looking this evening."

"Yes, very beautiful," Felicia's intended said, indifferently, and turned his head away impatiently, as though Miss Rawdon's handsome face was not the uppermost idea with him just then.

"Well, tell me, now, what you have been doing with yourself all day," Trixie asked presently; "idling?"

"Never did such a thing in my life," said Curzon. "No, I smoked a good deal, and lounged about a good deal, and tormented my mother and Felicia until they turned me out of the room, and, in fact, did everything useful, except going to see you, which you know was forbidden me."

"No fear you will ever have to reproach yourself, like Titus, by confessing to a 'lost day,'" laughed Beatrix. "How you must enjoy your leisure after such hard work!"

"Very much," he answered, lazily. "But I miss my friends at times, and perhaps I would have been happier had I seen you during this interminable day."

"Well, you see me now, so I hope you feel happy at last," said Miss Falkland. And then, when it was too late, she wished very much that she had not said it.

Curzon leant back against the ironwork of the balcony and stared hard at her for a minute. "How do you know you can make me happy?" he said.

"Because it is natural to be contented when with a person that one likes," replied Beatrice, almost impatiently. "And, of course, you like me."

"Beatrice, Beatrice!" interrupted Lord Stainer, passionately, "are you doing it on purpose?" And he caught her hand in his and held it tightly as he spoke.

In a moment the girl was silenced, chilled: all gaiety departed from her. Great a flirt as she was in her own way, her witcheries were harmless. She was honourable, too, and now stood horrified at the mere idea of this man—the chosen of her friend—being led by her into saying what he might ever afterwards repent.

"What are you saying?" she said, quietly. "Will you not resign me my hand? it will be better, as Felicia, if she sees you, will scarcely understand, perhaps, that you are merely in jest. Come back and let us finish our waltz." So they went back and finished their waltz in silence, and then Miss Falkland went up to where Miss Dorothy was sitting, very resplendent and dignified, in grey satin and lace.

To her she said, "You are tired, Aunt Dorothy; you will come home with me now."

Said Aunt Dorothy: "My sweetheart, no; I am quite content to sit here for some time longer and watch you dancing. I would not spoil your amusement for the world; and, indeed, I am enjoying myself."

"How can you tell me such a falsehood, you wicked woman?" Trixie said, gaily. "I command you to come home with me at once, as I really am very tired, and want to go myself."

Whereupon Miss Falkland senior replied, with heartfelt content: "My dear if you *really* wish it, of course I am ready." And they went.

As they travelled up the Fenton staircase together, about half an hour later, Miss Dorothy asked, lovingly, "You had a happy evening, my dear one?"

And Beatrice said, "Yes, a charming evening. I do believe the happiest evening in all my life," and straightway went into her bed-room, and locked her door, and cried bitterly for two long hours.

That night was doomed, I think, to be a night of mishaps and half declarations, hopeless as they were unfinished. Even while Curzon was putting Miss Falkland and her niece Beatrice into their carriage another scene was taking place very near them, in what was called the long conservatory, which, had they known it, might have given both Stainer and Beatrice great cause for thought. Miss Rawdon and Captain Dudley, having finished their dance, had wandered in there amongst the flowers, with no ulterior designs beyond gaining a little rest and time before the next dance should claim them. The conservatory-door was thrown wide open, and the cool night-air came streaming in upon them as they stood together and drank in gratefully its sweet, generous draughts.

They were very silent, these two—strangely so—silent with thoughts too deep for words. All night long there had seemed to hover round them some subtle, indefinable danger, that might at any moment declare itself and cause inextricable confusion. They feared the very sweetness of the loneliness they were now enjoying, and yet they lingered.

Each sought longingly to read the other's thoughts, and perhaps both did in reality guess more than half the truth. Once Felicia, raising her eyes, met those of Dudley fixed upon her intently with a strange, untranslatable expression in them that no true woman ever yet misunderstood. She, at least, did not, and lowered her eyes suddenly, with new-born shyness, flushing and paling again perceptibly. After that, she grew very nervous—almost painfully so—and strove eagerly to think of some commonplace to utter, but not one came to her assistance. Glancing upwards for inspiration, she found that the gleaming stars only dazzled her, while the very quiet beauty of the night merely made her own heart seem more restless in comparison. She moved impatiently, and, as she moved, her handkerchief fell to the ground. They both stooped to recover it, and in so doing their hands met. It was enough. "Felicia," he murmured, a ring of passionate love and despair running through his voice, his face cold and white.

Meanwhile the careless stars gleamed on triumphantly; the band played its merriest strains. Dull care seemed to have no part in that gay assemblage where all around was musical laughter, mingled with pleasant youthful voices. All was gaiety, flowers, and sweetest music: and Lady Stainer was fretting herself to death because she foolishly imagined her handsome son was paying more than ordinary attention to black-eyed Laura Santly; and the handsome son himself was bitterly regretting the engagement that debarred him from ever making the woman he best loved his own; and Beatrix Falkland was crying herself miserably to sleep in her own room; and Felicia Rawdon, as, with trembling fingers and throbbing heart, she undressed herself that night, found that her favourite handkerchief was missing.

It was a bright, warm afternoon in the middle of July, just two months since the last occurrences I have mentioned, during which time nothing remarkable had happened. Captain Dudley still lingered on with his cousin—having obtained further leave of absence—seeing Miss Rawdon dangerously often; and Curzon day by day discovered more surely that his heart was no longer in his own possession.

Said Stainer to himself this morning: "It is a lovely day. I will go down to Fenton and see—Miss Dorothy," which was the meanest equivocation possible on his part.

So he went: and, coming on the little grass parterre at the side of the house, where gaudy, old-fashioned flowers bloomed in luxuriant profusion, encountered *not* Miss Dorothy, but her niece Beatrix.

Now, Miss Falkland junior, having seen nothing further in his lordship's conduct to confirm the suspicions he had aroused two months before, had gradually dropped back into her old manner to him, and restored him to favour. She met him now with all her usual pretty frankness.

"Oh, is it you?" she said; "well, you are welcome. What brought you down to-day?"

"What a question!" Curzon exclaimed. "What do you suppose I came down for, but to see—you."

"Thank you. Then you are doubly welcome. I always make it a point to patronize any one who comes to see *me* with an emphasis. But, now, tell me what especially brought you here to see *me* this afternoon."

"Well, the fact is," Curzon said, drawing a letter slowly from his pocket, "I heard from a friend of mine to-day who is in some trouble, and I want you to give me your advice about him. Will you?"

"Of course I will," answered Miss Falkland, who was the pleasantest creature in the world to confide in; full of heartfelt sympathy for everybody's misfortunes, in spite of all her thoughtlessness.

"This is it, then," Curzon said calmly, but somehow not looking at his companion, while he crushed up the harmless letter in his hand. "My friend is engaged to be married; but the girl to whom he is engaged doesn't particularly care for him, and he himself has fallen deeply in love with another, for whom he cares as he never has, and never can again care for any one else. Under these circumstances, what ought my friend to do? Should he keep to his engagement?"

"Yes. I think he should keep to his engagement," Miss Falkland said slowly.

"Even though he has no heart in the matter?"

"Yes—even then. If your friend is an honourable man, he will certainly not break his word once given. He must hold to that: there is no other course left open to a gentleman."

"Is that your verdict?" Curzon said, sadly, coming over from the other side of the bed to where she was standing. "Do you allow him no hope? Must he wreck all his chances of happiness for the sake of an hour's folly? Would it not be more honourable to break such a loveless engagement than to keep it?"

"If I were the other woman and your friend came to me with such a story on his lips, I would not so much as give him my hand," Miss Falkland said very bravely; and then she turned very pale, and folded her hands together tightly.

"You are a cruel judge," Stainer answered bitterly. "And yet—I know that you are right."

"Curzon," whispered Beatrice softly, in tremulous tones, "is it your own story you are telling me?"

"Oh, Beatrix," said poor Curzon ; and took her hand passionately between his own.

"I feared so," Beatrix said, tenderly ; "and now you must never come here again. Hush—I am in earnest : surely you yourself must see the necessity for that." With sweet earnestness, she laid her hand again upon his arm, and raised her large pleading grey eyes to his ; and Curzon, who had been eagerly watching the variations of her small brown face during the past few minutes, seeing it now so close to his own, in a mad moment stooped and kissed her.

Perhaps, under the circumstances, it was the very best thing he could have done : at least it put an end to all sentimentality on the spot, and this latter article was very largely in the ascendant just then. Beatrix was by no means one of your crying sort on these occasions, being merely capable of going into a towering rage ; and therefore into a towering rage she went forthwith.

"How dare you," she gasped, "how dare you ? The idea of your so insulting me ! Get off my garden this moment, and go home ; and see if I don't go up to Felicia to-morrow morning and tell her every bit of it."

"You can tell Felicia what you please," Curzon answered meekly, feeling utterly subdued by this outburst, besides being conscience-stricken into the bargain. "I deserve all you can say, and more, but it was the thought of losing you—of never seeing you again—that made me so far forget myself. It is my only excuse, and—oh, Beatrix, my darling, I will go away from you for ever if you wish it ; only forgive me before I go."

"I won't," said Miss Falkland, indignantly. "I never will. Why do you stay, then, when I desire you to go ?"

"Because I *cannot* leave you in anger," Curzon pleaded desperately. "Surely, when you see me so wretched, you will give me a kind word to take away with me. If you say I must marry Felicia, I will do so, but for all that, you know well that it is you alone possess my heart. Beatrix, say I am forgiven, and I promise you shall never see me again."

"Well, on those conditions I forgive you," Miss Falkland said, solemnly, extending to him her hand as a token of pardon. "And—and—I *do* hope you will be happy, Curzon, and—Felicia is a great deal a nicer girl than I am, and will make you happier—I know ; although——" With which faint attempt at consolation, Beatrix burst into tears, and ran away to hide her sorrows in her own chamber.

"Curzon," said Felicia.

"Felicia," said Curzon.

It was the evening of the same day, and they were both stationed outside on the very same balcony where Stainer had so nearly betrayed

himself to Beatrix a few short weeks before. One of the windows was thrown open casement fashion, and on the low sill sat Felicia, looking like a beautiful framed picture, all golden hair, and fair white skin, and delicate pale-blue silk. Her hands were folded listlessly upon her lap, but on either cheek there burned a bright hectic spot that betokened clearly how some deep agitation was disturbing the surface of the usual calmness.

"I have something to say to you," she began, in a rather troubled tone.

"Then suppose you say it, my dear," Curzon suggested, calmly. He was leaning against the frame of the window, unconsciously setting off to perfection, with his magnificent height and figure, Miss Rawdon's extreme beauty. Not that he in the slightest degree appreciated her faultless face just then.

Thus admonished, however, Miss Rawdon, unwitting of his thoughts, gathered together all her energies, and plunged bravely into her self-imposed task.

"It is this, then," she said, hurriedly. "I do not mean to be unkind, and you must forgive me, Curzon, but—but—I am a little tired of our engagement."

After this announcement there ensued a long pause—a silence so intense that the very humming of some bees half a field away could be distinctly heard. Would he never speak? Miss Rawdon felt that the stillness was becoming unbearable. She glanced sideways at him, and could see that he was looking down, and had turned a dark crimson, but other symptoms of surprise or indignation there were none. He had not suffered his cigar to go out, neither had he seemed to lose his relish for it. He smoked away persistently as ever; and how was she to know that the man's heart beneath all this outward calmness was almost suffocating him with its wild throbbing? His coolness frightened Miss Rawdon more than all the high talking in the world could have done. Was he intent upon keeping her to this hated engagement? Ah, if it should be so! She clasped her hands together very closely and rose.

"You will give me up?" she said.

And he said: "I can scarcely do that, considering *you* have just thrown *me* over." And then Felicia knew that it was all over, and she was free to marry the man she loved. He *was* going to be honourable, she felt, and half made up her mind to cry, but decided afterwards that it might seem undignified, and so refrained. Presently Curzon roused himself, and, knocking the ashes from his cigar, asked quietly:

"Who is the man for whose sake you have broken off with me? Is it Arthur Dudley?"

"Yes, it is Arthur," Miss Rawdon allowed, lowering her eyes, and feeling completely subdued.

"Well, I hope you will be very happy with him," her cousin said;

gravely and kindly. "Am I to tell the mother all about it for you ; or has Dudley——"

"Oh no, no," exclaimed Felicia quickly, forgetting her dignity at this point, and dissolving into tears. "Of course he would not, until you had given me my freedom. Oh, Curzon dear, if you *would* but speak to Aunt Agnes, she will be so—and you know I am sorry, but I could not help it, and—and—you are not angry with me Curzon, are you?"

"No, I am not in the least angry with you," Curzon answered, kissing with unusual warmth her upturned face ; after which she went away to her own sitting-room, well content with the success of her interview.

When she had gone her grave cousin strangely and most suddenly disappeared, leaving a young man standing in his shoes who, with a radiant face and triumphant air, flung his cigar to the winds, while he exclaimed rapturously : "I am free : I will go this moment and tell Beatrix."

It was almost touching to witness the ecstatic manner in which he ran down the steps of that famous balcony, and made off through the park towards Fenton, utterly oblivious of the fact that he was minus his hat. He strode along under the grand old oaks with his handsome Saxon head erect, exulting fondly over this happy change that had come to pass in his life.

And then he fell to picturing Beatrix as mistress at Stainers, running here and there with her bonny gipsy face, and happy voice, and changeful, loving ways. As he arrived so far in his blissful day-dreams, he reached the low wall that bounded Miss Falkland's shrubberies, and having vaulted it, walked along by the tiny half-hidden pathway that led to the public avenue, where, in the distance, he heard the sound of lowered voices.

He was effectually sheltered from view himself by a huge overgrown laurel, that rose most opportunely before him ; but of that he thought not. Raising his eyes suddenly towards the spot from whence the sounds emanated, a few yards beyond him on the gravelled walk, he saw—ah ! what was it he saw?—not Beatrix, not the girl he so truly loved, in the arms of an utter stranger?

He started as though he had been struck, and, though as honourable a fellow as ever lived, he found that it was beyond his power to stir from the spot. He paused spell-bound, chilled to the heart's core. Beatrix was speaking ; and if it had been to save his life he could not have moved a limb.

"So that is all settled, then," Trixie said, in her usual soft wooing voice ; "and now I am afraid, my darling, you must go."

"I am afraid so," the tall stranger answered, tightening his arm affectionately round her ; "it has been a wretchedly short visit, has it

not? But next time I will try and manage better. Good-bye, my pet, I will write the very moment I get there."

"If you do not, I will never forgive you," Beatrice said. "I shall be so anxious to hear of your safe arrival. And now you are quite sure you are sufficiently careful about your throat, George?" standing on tip-toe to run her fingers lovingly round his neck, to see if he was well cared for, and to the great detriment of his collar (Curzon ground his teeth). "Because you should remember your last illness, you know, and you always *are* so careless."

"Not I. There is no fear of me, believe me. But now good-bye indeed, for the last time, my darling; I *must* be off." Whereupon Beatrice raised her face and kissed him, seemingly with all her heart.

It was enough. Sickened, and frantic with rage and grief, Curzon turned away, walking once more in the direction of his home. Bitter anger was at his heart.

But when he had walked about half-way, he came to a sudden standstill, and began to think rapidly: the result of which thinking brought him back again to Fenton at once and on to the same grass-plot where he had so signalized himself in the morning's encounter.

Miss Beatrice Falkland was there before him, with an enormous watering-pot in her hand, and did not look as much cut-up as she *ought* to have looked, considering the parting scene she had just gone through.

"Good evening," she said, with a certain amount of ill-disguised awkwardness that only added to her charms, and flushing crimson. She was thinking of the morning's work, you see, but he was not, and so put down the pretty blushing and awkwardness to another cause altogether.

He made no return whatever to her civil greeting, but began his mission at once, without any preliminaries.

"So you have got a lover," he said, with the most touching attempt at calmness. "I suppose I ought to congratulate you, Beatrice, but somehow I feel the words would choke me. Felicia has thrown me over of her own accord, and I came down here this evening to tell you so, thinking in my mad folly that perhaps you might care to hear it. But I confess I scarcely expected to find you in the arms of a stranger."

Here he paused for a moment.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Miss Falkland from the opposite side of a flower-bed, composed of scarlet geraniums and yellow calceolarias, that glowed with brilliant warmth in the deepening twilight. She was frightened, dismayed at his vehemence, and just a little angry.

"At least you might have told me," Curzon went on. "You talk of honour, but I think it would have been more honourable of you had you told me of this months ago—before I was hopelessly in love with

you—before it was too late, as it is now. I could never tell you what I think of your conduct, so I won't try. I have done with women from this day forth. I do not go so far as to wish you unhappiness—I *could* not wish you that—but I believe from my soul that deceitfulness never brought good to any one, and you yourself know well how far you have deceived me. You are merely a heartless flirt. I have no more to say to you." And as he finished speaking he turned on his heel and moved away a few steps.

But Miss Falkland was by no means satisfied that he should go just yet. Her slight anger during the commencement of his tirade had risen by degrees until at last it had reached a white heat. She had waxed very wrath indeed by this time, and was determined he should now listen to *her* line of argument, and receive what old ladies are wont to call a piece of their minds, before he went on his way this evening. So she began: "Have you not? Are you quite certain you have finished all you wished to say? Well, then, perhaps now you will be so kind as to listen to *me* for a few moments. You have called me deceitful and dishonourable, but at all events *I* was never accused of playing spy upon *anyone's* actions. You are—or have been—up to this engaged to Felicia, and therefore by what right do you, an engaged man, take me, or any other girl, to task about this lover or that? Are you my father confessor that you consider me bound to tell you all my private affairs? What do you mean by coming down here to insult me, and be insolent to me?"

"I certainly did not mean either to insult you or be insolent to you," Curzon said.

"I really cannot understand what you *do* mean," Trixie replied, passionately; "but, at all events, you *have* been most successfully insolent. You have called me deceitful, dishonourable, and a flirt. I wonder what all *that* comes to. And now"—drawing up her small figure scornfully, until she looked at least three inches taller in her righteous anger,—“and now let me tell you this: that man who kissed me and called me his darling was *not* a lover, but my second brother, Captain George Falkland!" After which triumphant declaration Miss Falkland gathered together all her energies, and marched past the vanquished enemy into the house with flying colours.

Said Curzon to himself: "Her brother George Falkland! *Who* would have thought it? Heaven and earth! what a fool I have made of myself!"

And really, on the whole, I rather think he had.

"Good evening, Miss Trixie," said Lord Stainer from the top of the low garden-wall, where he had planted himself.

It was the evening of the next day, and as yet the moral atmosphere was decidedly clouded.

"Good evening," returned Miss Falkland, and made a very stately inclination of her head to the raspberry-bush opposite which she was standing.

"It is a fine evening, is it not, Miss Trixie?" began his lordship again, turning round so that his legs were *inside* the garden-wall this time.

"Very," Beatrix answered, uncompromisingly.

A pause.

"Well," Curzon said presently, apostrophising a distant apple-tree, "in my young days I remember there used to be such a thing as hospitality. You are going to ask me to eat some of your fruit, Miss Trixie, are not you?"

"I do not suppose I could keep you out, even if I tried," Beatrix said.

"Which means that I have your permission to descend," declared Curzon, and, at once dropping down from the wall, he came over to where she was standing. "Good evening," he said again, and held out his hand.

"I am very sorry," said Miss Falkland coldly, "but I have so stained my hand with raspberry-juice that I could not dream of putting it into yours."

"Dear me, so you have," Stainer exclaimed, with evident concern. "What a pity! what a shame so to ruin such extremely lovely little hands. Shall I help you?" he went on pleasantly—he was the laziest fellow alive—"shall I? I should like to very much, if you will allow me. I daresay I could learn to pick raspberries if I tried; and when I have brought my fingers to the correct colour, perhaps *then* you might not object to put your hand in mine. If I help you, Miss Falkland, will you ask me in to tea?"

"I am quite sure Aunt Dorothy will be very charmed to see you," answered Aunt Dorothy's niece, with a great amount of dignity.

Stainer picked one raspberry and then flung it away. "Beatrix, won't you forgive me?" he said, and caught both her hands in his.

"I don't think I *ought* to," Beatrix answered in a low tone, and then in another moment he had her in his arms, and was kissing her with all his heart.

"My dear Love!" he said presently, when they had both sworn that nothing on earth should ever make either of them say an unkind word to the other again—"my dear love, what a mistake I made, and what a jealous wretch of a husband you are getting!" As he spoke he held her very closely to him, and looked as handsome and proud and happy as any young fellow could well look.

"You will never be jealous of me," Beatrix told him seriously, "because you know, Curzon, nobody could ever even *seem* to be the same to me that you are." Whereupon he kissed her again.

"And now tell me all about Felicia," said Beatrix.

"We must go in now," Beatrix declared, when they had asked and answered a hundred interrogations satisfactorily, slipping her hand within her lover's arm, and picking up her little basket of raspberries with a most demure air. "Aunt Dorothy will think I am lost. And now mind, Curzon, you must be very good, and not laugh one bit, because Annt Dorothy thinks very solemnly about engagements and marriages and all that."

So they went in together hand in hand, to tell their story ; during the telling of which Stainer behaved perfectly, neither laughing nor otherwise misconducting himself, and Aunt Dorothy was affected to tears. But as she said herself, these tears only showed how very glad she was, and how happy in the thought that now for evermore her darling would be near her.

Little more need be told beyond the mere fact of their marriages, which came off almost immediately. Miss Rawdon became Mrs. Dudley within two months of the breaking-off of her old engagement, and Captain Dudley, having sold out, they took a house near Stainers where they settled down, and are living very comfortably and happily.

Miss Falkland's wedding was, of course, a much more elaborate affair, Aunt Dorothy being determined that her niece should surpass herself on that day. So she had twelve bridesmaids, and the oldest lace, and the richest satin, and the largest and most indigestible wedding-cake that ever yet was seen ; and it was Captain George Falkland, who gave away the bride.



LIFE AT GASTEIN.

MOST of the visitors in Gastein are ordered to take nineteen baths ; a few patients here and there taking one or two more or less. This was the number the doctor prescribed for me : and after the seventh and fourteenth, a day's interval. On these two days I drank the waters as they came up warm from the springs, and the doctor was urgent in not allowing them to be touched at any other time. Some people, he said, persisted in taking the baths and drinking the waters together, and so mixed up the treatment that it was impossible to say what did them good and what not. The water was tasteless. Its chief virtue probably lies in the large amount of electricity it contains : a property that does not diminish with time. Gastein water may be exported to any part of Europe, and at the end of six or twelve months will still retain its healing powers.

The doctor called me into his dampfbad as I was passing it one morning, and began experiments with the water and an electrical machine. First he brought forward some ordinary water and applied the battery. The needle was motionless. Next he took a bottle of water obtained from one of the well known Spas of Germany. The needle moved, but slightly. Then he had some water brought in from the adjoining spring, and the needle under its influence moved considerably : proving it to be highly charged. Lastly he took a bottle of Gastein water a year old, and the needle with the old water moved as powerfully as it had done with the new.

"Thus you see," concluded he, "how eminently it is adapted for exportation. Neither time, nor land, nor sea-voyage, deprives it of its properties. Now let me show you my vapour bath."

We went into another room, where were various ingenious contrivances for the application of the vapour. Tubes for the mouth and ears ; a peculiar arrangement for the knees and feet ; another for affections of the spine. The vapour rushed up hot and hissing from various apertures, and after a short time I was unable to bear their strength. I came out of the room with a singing in the ears that for an hour afterwards almost deafened me.

"Here," said the doctor, "you get the utmost power of the springs. By this means the properties of the waters are administered to the patient in a condensed form."

"Are they useful in every kind of complaint ?" I asked.

"All those complaints for which Gastein is noted. You already know the catalogue does not embrace every ill flesh is heir to. The waters are only of use to those suffering from affections of the spine, nerves, to head : for this class of maladies there is perhaps no such cure in

the world. The vapour baths are also good for affections of the throat. Some of our best singers have come here, and left again with their voices completely restored."

"A pity Gastein is not more known," I remarked.

"It will be known well enough one day. Gastein is yet in its infancy; its fame lies in the future. It has had much to contend against—great difficulty of access to begin with. But railways are approaching: a few years and it will be as celebrated as the other watering-places of Germany."

"And then it will be no longer Gastein."

"Ah, my dear sir, we must be philanthropic. The good of mankind demands sacrifices; fame has its taxes. The waters are inexhaustible; the springs will bubble up to the end of time. As there is enough for all the world, let all the world come—such, at least, as stand in need of its healing powers."

"Still, it is a hard matter to pay such a price for the inroads of so-called civilization: a fatal consequence, I suppose you will say, of man's first disobedience. He sinned: not the earth, created in beauty and harmony. Where man has not trod the Almighty reveals Himself in all the majesty and marvel of creation. Where man passes he leaves behind him traces of his fallen nature."

"Gastein will always, to a great extent, remain what it now is," replied the doctor. "Its main characteristics cannot be altered. Civilization will never remove its mountains, or turn aside the course of that superb waterfall. Contracted and shut in, and as it were, apart from the world, what Gastein now is, that it will pretty well for ever remain."

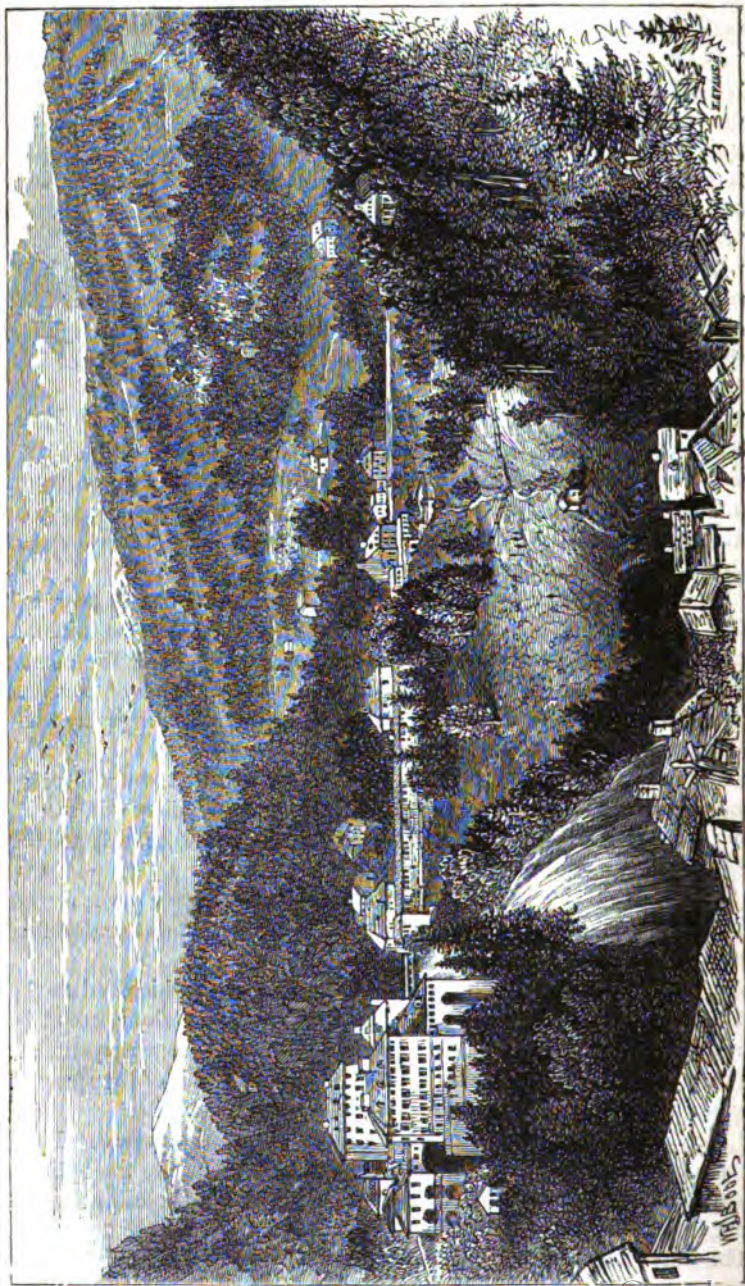
"Perhaps so," I said. "Especially as it is certain that you will never possess a railway to the place itself. That beautiful Valley of Gastein, with its wonderful pass, so terribly grand, will never submit to the ravages of steam and iron."

"I think," said the doctor, turning the subject, "I have never shown you the original source of the waters: where their existence was first discovered. Let us go to it now."

We went out, and began descending the steep hill which led to the bed of the valley. The waterfall, dashing and winding along, could be seen for a considerable distance, twisting about like a huge serpent. At the very bottom, in a small sheltered nook, within reach of the spray of the torrent, stood a small pool of water, its surface bubbling.

"Here," said the doctor, "the first spring was discovered. Here the poor stag was found, bathing its wounds. You see the bubbles rising. No one has even been able to find out the holes or fissures whence they escape."

The water felt warm and pleasant. It was very easy to imagine that upon a wound it would have a soothing influence.



GENERAL VIEW OF GASTIN.

"You are right," said the doctor in answer to the remark. "In such cases Gastein is unrivalled. For weakness resulting from wounds or loss of blood, it is excellent. You have observed that large pond in front of the wandelbahn—it is for horses. A horse, tired with a long journey, enters it, and comes out again refreshed and ready for more work. But if he goes in too often, and stays in too long, he becomes weak and good for nothing. They are perverse animals. It is difficult to get them into the water; but once in, it is difficult to get them out again. I have often taken a mineral bath after great bodily fatigue, and come out from it active and refreshed."

"Then you, too, have taken the baths?"

"Indeed, yes. We all do foolish things sometimes in our lives, and this was one of mine. I took them once day after day, day after day, until I was almost paralyzed. Now I never take them until the season here is over, just before starting for Nice. Active exertion taken in conjunction with the baths would in time kill the strongest man."

Where we were standing, perhaps more than in any other spot, it was possible to realize the wild beauty of Gastein. The ravine was so contracted that now its sides seemed about to meet and close over. We were at the foot of the great mass of falling water, and could trace its course far above us, a huge body of boiling, surging, down-dashing foam: its spray flying around, each particle, said the doctor, holding a grain of sand; its roar so deafening that we had to shout to each other as men shout amidst the crash of machinery. Its rapid but more silent course could be traced as it sped on to the lower valley. The mountains from this point naturally seemed higher and grander than I had yet seen them. Anything wilder than this aspect of Gastein could scarcely be conceived for a place inhabited and civilized. At hand stood a mill, the wheel turned by the water in its course. The miller came out for a moment, took a calm look at us, nodded to the doctor, and disappeared again to his work, bestowing not so much as a glance or thought upon the surrounding beauty, which seemed to be drawn in with every breath. Familiarity breeds contempt: things of every day existence men first of all grow accustomed to, and then cease to care for. It would be a different world, perhaps, did this familiarity not blind them to all the beauties of their common lives.

Above us were the few houses composing the village; though Gastein so little resembles an ordinary village that the term seems out of place. In front stretched the long wandelbahn, Straubinger's at its extremity rising up as if to defy the waterfall, which washed its sides in its progress. The Straubingers could boast an ancestry. For three centuries and a corresponding amount of generations, their fathers had held sway in Gastein: a pedigree to which a great many grand people possessing arms, and crests, and mottoes, and escutcheons, and family relics, and old plate, and ancient histories, cannot lay claim. But they had never

aspired to anything beyond the dignity of innkeepers. All had been born in a small cottage, the chief inn until the new grand building rose by degrees, and created a sort of revolution in the place. The old cottage had been pulled down, but Straubinger, clinging with fond memory to the room in which they had first seen daylight, saved it from ruin, and built other rooms about it.

To the left, perched in the distance, was the Schiller-höhe, the poet's bust standing out, crowned with the dry laurel leaves of Italy. The doctor glanced at his work with satisfaction seeming to think it a bright idea on his part. The leaves, brought from the sunny south, he knew not why, had been adapted to the most appropriate of uses. His own villa from this point looked up in the clouds, and, perched behind the Solitude boarding-house, seemed to keep watch over it with the eyes of Argus.



THE DOCTOR'S HOUSE.

Suddenly as we were looking at it, a small red flag appeared at one of the windows, and remained flying in the breeze : a signal for the doctor. Amongst other things he had established this telegraph, as he called it, between his house and the dampfbad, which, at opposite extremities of the village, were in view of each other. If the red flag appeared at the window of his consulting room, down posted one of his servants to ascertain what was wanted : if it appeared at the villa, up went the doctor on the same errand.

"You know," said he pointing to the signal, "they cannot always tell where to find me."

It was impossible not to laugh at the idea suggested. The doctor looked up in surprise. Had he spoken bad English?

"Excellent English," I returned. "But your remark brings to mind how difficult it is for any one to lay hands on you. Easier does it seem catch a will-o'-the-wisp."

"I have so much to do," he said, as if in apology. "For two moments together I cannot be certain of myself. Take yesterday, for example. Two of your compatriotes were arriving: two charming ladies: and I went out to meet them as far as the Café Vergismeinnicht. You see I thought a welcome would cheer them up. Would you believe the trouble they gave me!"

"What trouble?" I asked, as he paused.

"This trouble. A fortnight ago they write me word they are coming to Gastein, and I must engage rooms for them. I did so. Four days ago they write me word their plans are altered and they are not coming. So I pay twenty gulden for the rooms and give them up. Yesterday they write me word they have returned to their former plans and are coming: will I keep the rooms. But if it is permitted to ladies to change their minds, it is also permitted to inn-keepers to let their apartments."

"The rooms were gone, I suppose?"

"As soon as I get this letter from these charming but changeable ladies, I rush off to the Hirsch and the rooms were occupied: let but an hour before to a Russian countess, who engaged them because they are quiet and she could take the air without being stared at. So yesterday I meet these ladies and say, 'My dear ladies, I am delighted to welcome you once more to my beloved Gastein, but your rooms are no more.' Well, we went all over the place, and they could find nothing to their mind. Twenty-five rooms in the Hirsch, but, would you credit it, every one sans stuffs."

"Without what?" I cried, puzzled.

"Stuffs, my dear sir; stuffs; not one with stuffs, you know."

"But I don't know," I returned, unable to guess at his meaning.

"Twenty-five rooms and all unfurnished?"

"No, no," exclaimed the doctor. Chairs, tables, and beds in abundance, but no stuffs. You see, the ladies not being in good health, are often cold, and require a fire."

"Oh!" cried I, bursting into laughter, as light dawned. "You mean stoves. The rooms were stoveless."

"Stoves, then," replied the doctor, repeating the word correctly.

"What did I say to make you laugh so?"

"Where did you finally leave the ladies?" I asked, passing over his question.

"At the Solitude. And there they are, comfortably settled. I wonder what is going on at my villa," he added, pointing to the flag that was still flying. An invasion, perhaps."

"Some more goats, for instance, and no Don Quixote to frighten them away."

"I doubt that," he laughed. "But let us go and see. Have you aught to do in particular?"

"What a question in Gastein! And from you too, a patient. I wish I could say yes; but, alas, it is always no."

"Then we will together find out whether this signal is not much-ado-about-nothing."

Re-ascending the rugged hill-side, we were soon in the road. Past the only shop the place could boast of for all visible sign of another; where everything but bread and meat was sold: past the solitary apothecary's, who dispensed his pills and black draughts from the first floor of an old house. He was scarcely ever in, that apothecary. A perpetual placard was suspended from the handle of the door announcing that he was at the Hirsch, where he was in the habit of taking his meals; so that at last I came to the conclusion that he spent most of his time in eating and drinking. Yet how thin he was. A pale, hollow face; a bushel of light yellow hair that stood on end as if it had once been electrified and never recovered the shock; clothes that appeared to contain nothing but a pair of broad shoulders and long, lean legs, absolutely repudiating the notion of such a thing as a stomach. His temperament was decidedly phlegmatic; he worked in a calm, deliberate manner, thinking it best perhaps to be slow and sure; though he never gave you the idea that he thought of anything: except, perhaps, the Hirsch and its larder.

Past the pharmacy we journeyed: past Straubinger's, and through the wandelbahn, where we loitered for a moment's chat with the library woman; out again into the open, and in sight of the villa. The red flag had disappeared. The doctor rubbed his eyes.

"It certainly was there," cried he. "I don't think it was fancy. You saw it?"

"Undoubtedly. We both saw it. Marie has perhaps lost patience and taken it in."

We went on, and no sooner appeared on the steps than out rushed Marie, her hands raised in dismay.

"Marie," cried the doctor, "whence this inconsistency. What made you show the signal and then withdraw it?"

"Why had she shown the signal? Because the Herr Doctor's dinner was getting cold, and she wondered why he did not arrive to eat it. But when the damage was done and the dinner frozen, she took it in again. He might then come when it pleased him."

We looked at each other in dismay. No thought of dinner had occurred to either. The table d'hôte hour had long passed. There remained but to make the best of it. The doctor hastened in to his neglected meal, and I went back to Straubinger's at a quicker pace than usual; determined for once to be thankful for small mercies.

The days went on, and our stay was drawing to a close. I had originally started for Gastein with the intention of remaining there three months; but this was found to be not only unnecessary, but sheerly

impossible. So long as the baths had to be taken, there was an object in view ; and it is a satisfaction to go through with an undertaking : but the baths at an end, I felt that for me Gastein would be at an end also. It has been said that I took nineteen baths, and the two last were comparative failures. I had had enough ; as much, to quote the doctor, as the system would receive.

Then I ceased. The doctor advised, nay insisted upon, a week's absolute rest and quiet ; when I proposed going away the very next morning, he threatened to put me under lock and key. So, rather than bear imprisonment, I yielded ; and he shook me vigorously by the hand, and called me a tractable patient.

"But how do you feel?" quoth he. "What are your sensations, now the baths have ceased?"

"Not at all uncommon," I replied, "as far as I can make them out. I feel very much as I did when I began ; if anything, perhaps a little weaker."

"So much the better. You will be all the stronger by and by, and will derive permanent benefit from the cure. I am glad you are staying ; to-morrow is a grand day with us."

"For what reason?" I asked. "Are you going to be married?"

"No, no, he cried, laughing. "I am a sincere admirer of the fair sex ; the world without the ladies would indeed be a barbarous and uncivilized state of existence ; but I have no time to prove my devotion by a marriage. My profession is my wife, and I assure you I often find her as much as my two hands can manage. Do you mean to say that my faithful but gossiping Marie does not post you up in all the news of the place?"

"For once she seems to have failed. I had no idea that to-morrow was more than any other day. What makes it so?"

"Well, then—but it is a very small matter after all—to-morrow is our Fête-Dieu ; and it will be celebrated with a grand procession."

"Is that all?" cried I. "I have seen processions without number in the large Roman Catholic towns of France and Germany, with all the gold and glitter of wealth about them ; and I am heartily tired of the show."

"Possibly. But processions in your large towns, and here in Gastein, are very distinct things. To see the pageant winding about the mountains : the girls in white ; the priests in their gay vestments ; the gorgeous banners swaying in the wind ; the glittering etceteras : is an object unusual and picturesque. Should to-morrow prove a fine day, you ought not to miss it."

The morrow dawned bright and glowing. At ten o'clock a gun was fired from a cliff in one of the rocks, and the sound went echoing through hill and vale. The procession was on the move ; and during the whole ceremony the gun continued to be discharged at intervals.

It was, as the doctor observed, a simple matter, after all ; a quiet show. To one brought up in bigotted Roman Catholic towns, and familiar with processions in all their gorgeous pomp and magnificence, the simplicity seemed almost bordering on absurdity. But it precisely suited the character of the village ; anything more elaborate would have been out of harmony with the scene. As it went winding along, now up in the hills, now down in the valley ; standing out conspicuously amidst the green ; girls and women, men and boys, all quietly but artistically dressed ; it could but be admitted that the procession possessed a charm beyond the power of wealth and city to bestow. The whole village seemed to take part in the ceremony ; it was a mystery where the inhabitants came from ; and after they had dispersed most of them were no more seen. All who took no other part in the procession assisted as spectators ; making the most of the short and simple annals of their existence. The visitors were most of them new arrivals, a few old faces looming out here and there, with whom I shared the feelings of an ancient inhabitant.

Last in the procession came the priests, supported by a brass band in the rear : a grand band, its music well sounding. Notes that might have been harsh ; harmony that here and there might have been slightly discordant ; time, that in an orchestra might possibly have created some slight confusion ; all was passed over. The hills took up the melody, and the multiplied echoes accounted for everything. The priests themselves were plainly robed ; either not caring for the rich vestments of the Roman Church, or unable to afford them. Indeed it is difficult to see what purpose they would have served, the minds of the peasantry being far too unsophisticated to be held in awe and bondage or even influenced by these outward and visible signs of wealth and pomp which the great world worships. Most of these simple villagers had never been ten miles beyond their birthplace ; never seen anything resembling a town ; never had other occupation than tending of cattle, combined with such work as the mountains yield. Rich, gaily dressed visitors from the high places of the earth, it is true, frequented Gastein in the season, but the peasants, absent in their hills and huts, saw little of them. The visitors, moreover, only appeared in certain frequented spots, at given times ; long walks were forbidden : and so they clustered together in small colonies and groups, like seeking like.

With their simplicity, religious feeling and reverence is strongly developed in the Tyrolese : men and women. If ever I risked my life by venturing upon a drive in one of the little one-horse conveyances ; which all looked as if they had come out of Noah's Ark, and had since been undergoing a sentence of perpetual hard labour : the coachman never passed any of the roadside crucifixes without baring his head. I never found one who failed to prove his sense and recognition of religion by this outward token of respect. At a first glance it may be

thought a trifling matter, but scarcely so when it is remembered that it was of daily and oft-repeated occurrence. Easy enough to do, perhaps but easier still to leave undone. To any Englishman, accustomed to meet with very little of this reverence in his own country it could not pass over unobserved. Shut up within themselves; seldom demonstrative except perhaps where demonstration might as well not be; many lessons might be taken to heart and mind from these simple, far-off, out-of-the-world mountain folk.

But the procession is passing out of sight: it is winding back to the church through the path overlooking that wonderful valley: the voices are dying in the air, faint and fainter yet, with a stage-like effect that appeals to the senses: a few more guns and the last is fired. The church has swallowed up the show and ceremonial.

I happened to be close to Straubinger's when two of the maidens returned in their smart clothes. Out rushed some of the women on the watch for them, spread carpets and aprons over the wooden bridge leading to the lower regions, where the artistic cook held reign, and erected an impromptu triumphal arch of brooms and mops and other domestic weapons. The girls were hoisted in amidst blushes and shrieks of laughter: planning, doubtless, in their own minds, for this mockery of state, speedy and ample revenge.

When all was over the visitors dispersed, not sorry to take refuge from the blazing sunshine. It had been a splendid morning, but no sooner had the procession disappeared than a dark bank of clouds came up from the East and rain began to fall. The shower sent the people like snails into their houses, and in a short time the scene had changed to the table-d'hôte. The dinner was neither worse nor better than usual. The chief topic of conversation was the event of the morning: how fortunate it was there had been no rain; how strange it should have come so soon after; inquiries as to whether any one had felt any ill-effect from the unwonted exposure to the sunbeams, and a unanimous agreement that no one had given the matter a thought. The conversation being so general and interesting, war with the toothpicks was waged less fiercely than usual; but it was delayed, not dismissed; for when the company dispersed, the offending quills were carried off in triumph.

"Well," said the doctor, coming up that afternoon into the arbour, where I was sitting over an old volume of "*Bleak House*," "what think you of the procession?"

"Very good," I answered, closing the book and leaving the unlucky little Jellaby with his head one side the area-railings and his body the other. "Better than we might expect from Gastein."

"We have our resources on occasion," replied the doctor, humourously. "Then you enjoyed it almost as much as those of your fine large towns?"

"More so."

"I told you. There is a simplicity about this which comes home to us. Here you find man more as he was first created ; noble, generous, untutored ; in the midst of a beautiful and as yet unspoiled earth."

"And you think that man and his actions must be in accordance."

"Undoubtedly. You do not meet with contradictions in nature. If a man is good he will show himself good ; if he is bad, this too will soon become evident. I am glad you were here for the show : though a small matter, it is as well to see everything."

"I also am glad. Everything about Gastein pleases me. I quite agree with you that the nature of the peasantry is simple and noble. I hope it will remain so."

"I think it will," replied the doctor.

"It is not improbable," I returned. "They are, on the one hand, too far removed from the world to be under the influence of civilization and its penalties : on the other hand their little world is of such beauty that it must continually act upon them for good. I am sorry to leave it all."

The doctor shook his head. "It is nothing but coming and going, coming and going. This, situated as I am, is one of the great drawbacks of my profession. If I become attached to a patient—it happens now and then—no sooner do I begin to take pleasure in their society, and feel that I am getting to know them, than away they go, and perhaps I see them no more. What are those lines of one of your poets ? —'I never taught a dear gazelle, to—to' what is the rest ?"

" Watch me with its coal-black eye,
But when it came to know me well
And love me, it was sure to die—"

I quoted, ending the verse for him.

"Hem !" he cried. "My patients don't die, happily for them and me ; but they go away, perhaps for ever. So to me it is like death. You are laughing—think me sentimental. Is it true Englishmen are so very unromantic ?"

"I don't know much about it. If they possess the virtue, I fancy they carefully bottle it up out of sight."

"And do you approve ?"

"Je n'en sais rien."

"Do you not like the Germans better than the English ?"

"Can you ask me to bear witness against my own flesh and blood ?"

"Bear witness to the truth," cried the doctor, firing up theatrically. "I press for an answer."

"Without making comparisons, I like the Germans much. My experience has been chiefly amongst the Saxons ; I have met with more kindness and hospitality from them than from any other people in the world. But my world is limited."

"They are a fine race," said the doctor. "Have you seen Schiller's little house near Leipzig?"

"Many a time. And many a time dived into Auerbach's keller, where Goethe placed some of his scenes in *Faust*."

"Ah! ah! What a man he was! But to me Schiller's life has always borne a deeper interest. There is so much sadness about it; so much romance; and yet so much hard-working reality. I am quite proud of my bust over there at the Schiller-Höhe."

He took up some glasses on the arbour table and looked across. I could just manage to see the head and laurel-wreath.

"Your eyes are younger than mine," cried the doctor. "There is one thing the baths of Gastein cannot do: when we get old they cannot make us young again. Here as elsewhere the seven stages of man creep on."

"But are they not longer stages?"

"I don't know. Many live to a great age; many keep young in a marvellous manner; but many also—especially the women—get old all at once. This year they will be still young, vigorous, active; the next, shrivelled, shrunken, old."

"Their lives are spent in such hard work," I remarked. "It is healthy, but tells in the end."

"Ay! that and the want of good animal food. The rich can only get it from afar; the poor must do without it altogether."

"Yet how healthy the peasants look. Handsome, well made, stalwart."

"So they are. Their beauty and manliness are hereditary. Healthy they cannot help being. Simple lives such as theirs, passed in the open air; simple occupations; could produce no other result. But when we grow old we require more care and nourishment; and many for want of it pass quickly into the sere and yellow leaf."

"Perhaps they are as well without it," I said. "Indulgence of any sort is a creeping evil. Here it is happily impossible; and that which is impossible never becomes a necessity. A pity there are not more impossibilities out in the world."

"That," returned the doctor, "is truer than many think for. Mankind is becoming degenerated and ruined by over-indulgence and refinement. It is a bitter apple that crumbles to ashes in the mouth."

"You think so?"

"I am certain. How many men, think you, unconsciously commit suicide in this manner? What would you say if I told you the greater part? Yet it is true. What would become of us doctors, if men lived temperate lives? Such lives as God intended them to lead? For all the work we should be called upon to perform, the greater portion might retire to a monastery, and end their days in the odour of sanctity."

"How has man thus fallen?"

"How? Because one thing leads on to another. Because things impossible here are possible in the world. Because man has become a slave to himself: the body has mastered him, not he the body."

"You are drawing a terrible picture," I cried: "though I fear not altogether an ideal one."

"I give you leave to brush out all that is untrue," replied the doctor. "The picture will come back to me untouched."

"Is it not better not to think of these things?"

"Yes—as long as we are doing our best. I never allow myself more than a glance at them, and that but seldom. If I were to begin by looking at home, I am overdoing it: by hard, incessant work, which may one day tell upon me. This is self-indulgence in its way: the indulgence of labour."

"Few men would call hard work self-indulgence."

"It is though," he returned. "I find my pleasure in my work, just as other men find pleasure in idleness and folly and dissipation."

"But you must do what comes before you. If a patient sends for you it is not possible to reply that you have done as much work to-day as is good for the body, and will see him to-morrow. He might die in the meantime."

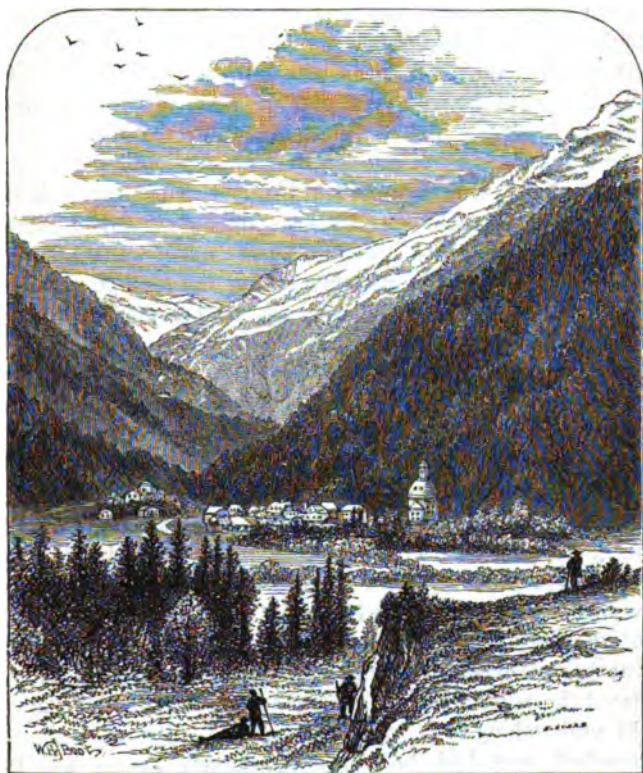
"True," cried the doctor, laughing and consulting his watch. "And time, which runs on here just as it does in the great, fast world, reminds me that my afternoon division of labour should have begun long ago. So I bid you farewell, and leave you to solitude, and the quiet contemplation of this lovely scene."

The solitude he spoke of was indeed scarcely possible in the midst of this wild, beautiful country. At this moment I faced the gold mountain upon which the snow was still visible. For two months in the year only—July and August—does it entirely disappear; and then not always. Occasionally, when the snows had almost melted, dense clouds would envelop the mountains; rain would fall in abundance; and when all was again clear and bright, they would stand out once more in their white, wintry garments.

To-day the snow was all but gone; only a small patch left on the gold mountain, looking at this distance, not much bigger than a man's hand. Thin streaks of white ran down the slopes like silver threads until the hill intervening between Gastein and Bockstein shut out the sight.

The contrast was remarkable between the two aspects, Gastein on the one side, Bockstein on the other, the one rude, wild, stormy, the other comparatively calm and quiet: Gastein never silent from the roar of its mighty torrent, of which nothing could be heard when you were turned from it on the road to Bockstein. Here also was moving water, but of a gentler character, howbeit a gentleness that in ordinary places would have been thought wild and rough. The narrow, shallow river, rushing

and leaping over large rocky stones ; now cleaving a field asunder ; now so near the mountain as to leave room for only a small, rugged, fatiguing pathway ; the noise of the water bearing the sound of a far-off sea ; its aspect very much that of angry foam. Involuntarily the mind recalled the words, more forcible here than amongst the dignified, quiet flowing rivers of England : " But I go on for ever—for ever—for ever." Absently, perhaps they would be repeated aloud, and the stream seemed to catch up the tones and carry them echoing far away on its course—



BÖCKSTEIN.

"For ever—ever—ever," until, infinitely multiplied, the air appeared laden with a soft whispering of the eternal word.

Surrounded by such influences, it is impossible not to feel that there is a mysterious, a mighty power in nature : coming home to the heart more than all the sermons that ever were written : appealing directly to the soul, and causing strange yearnings after the Infinite and the Perfect. Almost it seems as if the soul had thrown off the chains and attractions and seductions of the world, and stood, as did Adam of old, face to face with the Almighty. The Hand of God is visible amongst the everlast-

ing hills, standing as they were in the days they were created ; as they were long ages before you who are gazing at them were born ; as they will be long ages after you who are gazing at them will have passed away from the scene. You feel and hear, as if spoken by a still, small voice, your immortality : and thus you are enabled to contemplate with calmness, scenes of grandeur and sublimity that otherwise would almost suspend life.

To-day, long after the scene has passed out of sight, it is strange to think of that stream, still, leaping onwards : that just as it was then being looked upon, so others may be looking upon it at this moment ; no stone, perhaps, moved from its bed ; no change in its sound or its murmur. So will it be next year, and the next, and for centuries and ages ; when every one now drawing breath in the world shall have passed over the borders of another, but unseen, and far more awful River : when hands now writing, and hearts now beating with life and love, and voices now delighting us with their soft, sweet tones, shall in this world be hushed and stilled for ever.

This walk was a favourite with me, taking the road going, the river-side returning. But the whole way was seldom managed, for it was tiring, and would cause the doctor to look blue and gloomy. There was something attractive even in its solitude, and the rare chance of encountering a human being. But one certain day, a splendid dog crossed my path ; one of the most beautiful animals ever seen ; large and bold, with good-tempered brown eyes. He was closely followed by one of the villagers of Böckstein. On further acquaintance the man seemed willing enough to sell the dog, and assuredly the animal would then and there have changed owners, but that happily I bethought myself in time that probably there would be greater trouble and expense in conveying the dog to England than his master. So off he went, with a lick of the tongue and a wag of the tail, and a sagacious look out of his great brown eyes that seemed to say he knew all about it and appreciated the admiration. As things turned out it would have been no slight undertaking to bring him to England. Before its shores were again reached, war had broken out between France and Prussia, and many a time I was pushed hardly to find room for myself in the heavily freighted military trains. A dog would certainly have had no chance.

It was remarkable how, at Gastein, the power of walking deserted me. This is a common experience of the place, though not universal. The shortest stroll would often prove more than enough, the journey back to the villa after dinner, a labour and toil to the poor body. When the last day had dawned, and the baths had been some time over, I was fain to confess with reluctance that I felt little better for it all.

The doctor persisted in declaring it an excellent sign : slow recovery would be the more sure and permanent : never mind if at times I felt

rather worse than ever. It was nature working ; and she must work in her own way. Eventually the result would be satisfactory.

At present it was anything but that, and therefore I endeavoured to place as much reliance as possible in the doctor's comforting assurances. Now and then, as he predicted, there would come gleams and flashes of the old wonted health ; and these, though transient, were enough to kindle into life and animation the slight spark of hope, without which the world would scarce hold on its way.



SPRING.

A VIOLET fringed wood, whence comes a sound
Of murmuring cadence. To his sorrowing mate
The ring-dove coos, like plash on thirsty ground
Of limpid waters : " Love, she tarries late,
For whom we long ; Oh ! sad the weary hours,
Until she comes to wake the sleeping flowers."

An arch of colour flung across the sky,
And silvery rain-drops filtering through a cloud,
The tears of Heaven, which dim her azure eye,
But brighten earth and melt her wintry shroud.
The Spring doth come to end the weary hours,
And wake with soft caress the sleeping flowers.

The nightingale from out her leafless tree,
Brown as the downy softness of her breast,
Pours forth a stream of sudden melody,
And adds her share of tribute to the rest.
A maiden wandering by the riverside,
And gathering myosotis growing free ;
She casts the blossoms on the hurrying tide,
And whispers low : " I send them, love, to thee.
The Spring hath come to end our weary hours,
And with her soft caress hath woke the flowers."

M. L. E.

WITH THE CURRENT.

M R. WYNNE sat smoking an after-dinner cigar on the balcony at his house, Riverside. Seated with him, and smoking also, was his friend, John Bassett, usually called Jack.

Riverside was a lovely place, and its revenues were good. The large gray-stone house stood upon an eminence near the river. Noble oaks clustered round it, and a green lawn sloped down to the water, which went sweeping by : a broad, deep stream, clear as crystal.

A mile, or two, away, whether by the river or the road, stood Belmont, the jointure-house of Mr. Wynne's step-mother. A nice place also : and Maurice Wynne and his father's widow were good friends. Maurice was a handsome man, getting on for thirty now. People wondered why he did not marry ; ladies especially would have liked to put the question to him direct. He could have answered that he had never yet cared for any girl sufficiently to marry her.

The young men smoked in silence, watching the last rays of the summer sun. Presently Mr. Wynne spoke in a quiet tone.

"Lucy Lenoir is coming to my mother's next Monday."

Jack started ; looking round with wide-open eyes, and voice of energy.

"The devil she is !"

"Yes. I thought you knew her, Jack."

"Knew her !" retorted Jack, letting his cigar fall. "By George ! I should think I did know her. Why, she's an old love of mine—and of Harvey Ellis's—and of all of us ! Everybody falls in love straight off with Lucy Lenoir."

"What kind of girl is she ?" asked Mr. Wynne—who for the past two years had been abroad. "Pretty ?"

"Pretty !" echoed Jack sarcastically. "She's 'pretty' enough to take the conceit out of Helen of Troy and Mary-Queen of Scots combined. Pretty's not the word for *her*, Maurice. That's not all : she is so fascinating that no fellow can resist her. And she's the most unconscionable flirt on earth. She flirted with Ellis till he couldn't tell black from white. She flirted with Cary, and Mark Stuart, and Captain Bentley, and—me."

Maurice Wynne laughed at the pitiable tone.

"Oh, you may laugh !" cried Jack, sharply. "I can tell you we did not find it a laughing matter. At least, I can speak for one of us."

"Try her again, Jack."

"No use," was the curt answer. "She has just had her amusement, and—voilà tout. How long is she going to be here, Maurice ?"

"Don't know. As long as she and her mother please."

"Oh ! la mère comes, does she ! By the way, Maurice—are they not related to you ?"

"Not to me. Mrs. Lenoir and my step-mother are cousins."

"Well, take care of your heart, old fellow. Miss Lucy will make havoc of it if she can."

"Let her try," was Maurice Wynne's self-assured and somewhat scornful answer. "I don't fall in love with every girl I meet, Jack—as some people do. I hate flirts as I do the deuce."

"Yes, yes. Poor Bentley talked in that way—before he knew her," nodded Jack. "And I think he was worse cut-up than any of us. He didn't say much about it, but he looked as melancholy as an owl. Henderson, on the contrary, used to talk of her all day, and quote poetry about her faithlessness and some 'Lady Rose.'"

' Oh, they will perish needlessly
Who doat on Lady Rose.'

We got to call her Lady Rose at last," concluded Mr. Bassett.

"Henderson was in for it, was he ?"

"Down in the depths. She never made a promise to Henderson or to anybody else, understand. That's the worst of her. The way she had of keeping a fellow hanging on tenter-hooks and broken bottles, and never committing herself, was maddening. She wouldn't say yes, and she didn't say no. There's not a fellow living, clever enough to make her come to the point and answer him at once."

"I believe you are in love with her still, Jack," said Maurice Wynne, laughing.

"Of course I am. She's not with me though, you see. There's Oscar bringing my horse round ; and I must be off. Good bye, my old friend : and when you see the young lady, remember my warning—

' A look's enough to ruin you,
Oh, fly from Lady Rose !'

Shaking Mr. Wynne's hand, John Basset mounted and rode off, leaving behind him anything but a favourable impression of Lucy Lenoir.

Mrs. and Miss Lenoir had been at Mrs. Wynne's three days before it occurred to Maurice that it would be merely civil in him to call and see them. Sauntering down to the boat-house, he seated himself in his little skiff, and keeping under the shade of the willows on the river bank, he partly rowed and partly floated with the current down to Belmont.

It was a very easy and indolent mode of progression. The sun was shooting long level rays under and through the drooping willows, when Maurice neared the Belmont landing.

A little above the landing in the middle of the river, was a tiny island ;

a lovely spot, covered with the greenest grass, with beautiful trailing vines, and shaded by several gnarled and twisted willows. Maurice Wynne crossed the river just above the island ; and, turning round the point, came sweeping down with the quickened current close to the island shore. Here he suddenly raised his head and rested on his oars, surprised to hear the sound of voices near him. There was a little ripple of laughter, a rustle of leaves, and then a soft, clear voice, singing :

“ Wave willows, murmur waters,
Golden sunbeams smile !
Earthly music cannot waken
Lovely Annie Lyle ! ”

Annie Lyle ! A foolish little song that Mr. Wynne had never had the patience to listen to, but it sounded sweet and pathetic now. Here was a voice that could put soul and music and pathos into one of the silliest, most common-place ballads ever sung.

Maurice waited and listened for the continuation of the song, but a dead silence followed, and his boat drifted on along the shore, while he looked in vain under the willows for the singer. Presently a twig was thrown upon his hat, and a childish giggle broke out above his head. He knew *that* laugh ; and looked up to see a sparkling, brown-eyed gipsy face peering down at him from the overhanging bow of a crooked willow. It was his little half-sister Emma, a merry romp of twelve years. She was seated on the bough, in a torn cotton frock, her sun-bonnet swinging from her hand, and her dark hair falling over her eyes.

“ Maurice ! Oh, I’m so glad you’ve come ! ” cried Emma. “ Our boat has drifted away. I didn’t chain it ; and we have been unable to get back to the landing. Come under here, and let me get in.”

Maurice rowed close up, caught her and swung her lightly into the rocking boat. He was just asking “ who are ‘ we,’ Emma ?—whom have you led into mischief, now ? ” when he became conscious suddenly of the quiet gaze of a pair of deep-blue eyes that had been watching him steadily for some moments.

The eyes belonged to a young lady who sat in an easy, half-reclining attitude on the bent trunk of the old willow, half-hidden by its long, swaying branches.

A slender, graceful figure ; a fair, sweet face ; and, falling over her shoulders, a stream of soft fair hair, which had become loosened from its fastenings. The sunlight glittered through the willow boughs, and flickered over the girl’s bright hair, on her delicate hands, and on the semi-transparent folds of her light muslin dress.

She made a lovely picture as she sat there, looking gravely out of those sweet blue eyes. A picture painted in soft, tender tints of pearly white and faint rose, with gleams of pale gold colour ; and over and around

it all, the cool green shadows and flickering rays of sunshine. A scarlet lobelia bloom, caught in her falling hair, formed the one spot of vivid colouring in the picture.

For one moment Maurice Wynne met the gaze of those soft eyes without moving or speaking. Then a little smile stole round her lips, and she rose and stood waiting quietly for the boat to come to the shore.

She had seen the expression of admiration that succeeded astonishment in his face—for in spite of his prejudices, his whole heart and imagination had been dazzled with the picture. But Miss Lenoir was quite used to that sort of thing; and even the admiring gaze of as splendid a pair of brown eyes as Maurice Wynne's did not deepen the wild rose of her cheek. She bent her pretty head gracefully as Maurice stepped on shore, and smiled at Emma's called-out introduction:

"This is my brother Maurice, Lucy. Don't mind him: you are cousins, you know."

"We are very glad to see you, Mr. Wynne," she said, still looking at him with those calm, sweet eyes. "We were beginning to fear we would have to spend the night on this island."

"I am most happy to have come to your rescue," declared Maurice, quite recovered from his momentary bewilderment. "May we shake hands as cousins?" he added laughing. "Emma has placed us on the right footing."

Lucy laughed and gave him her hand very frankly and cordially; but shook her head as she did so.

"We are not cousins at all, Mr. Wynne; and we never saw each other before. Don't let us be precipitate. Perhaps we shall hate each other, and then—" She paused, laughing; and looked at him mischievously.

"Hate each other! I shall never hate you."

"How very good you are!" said Lucy, demurely. And then her blue eyes fell and her colour did deepen a little, for Maurice's eyes were very persistent in their earnest admiration. And what glorious eyes they were!

As Miss Lucy found out for herself—and mentally acknowledged. "Really mamma should not have brought me here and into contact with those eyes if she cares for me to marry Mr. Golding!" thought the young lady when an hour or so had elapsed, and she sat yet on the old willow trunk, with Maurice on the grass at her feet, looking up into her face.

They were in no haste to leave the island. Emma, that charmingly accommodating child, was building a grotto of pebbles on the other shore, having landed there: and these two sat on and talked until the very last ray of sunshine glimmered and faded on the water, and the starry summer twilight came stealing on.

"Must we go?" said Maurice, regretfully, when Lucy at last rose from her seat.

"I am afraid we must. It is very late, and mamma will scold me enough as it is," said Lucy. "She must be thinking I am drowned already."

"Besides, we want something to eat," said practical Emma. "I am so hungry."

"And the dew is falling. See: my dress is quite damp," Lucy continued, shaking out the muslin folds.

Maurice sprang up with a look of concern. "I am afraid we have stayed too long. You will take cold. It was very thoughtless and—selfish of me."

Lucy laughed. "No, indeed, it will not hurt me. And," she added, in a lower tone, "it has been very pleasant here. I did not want to go."

Emma had already sprung into the boat and seated herself in the bow. Lucy and Maurice followed lingeringly. Very slowly the boat moved down the river: for they had yet some way to go.

"Maurice, why don't we go faster?" demanded Emma. "You are not rowing at all. We are only floating."

"Oh, this is delightful," Lucy exclaimed. "It's so nice to float on with the current, and not think about the world and its worry. Don't row, please, Mr. Wynne. Let us take our time."

So she sat there, idly trailing her hand through the water, enjoying the coolness, the stillness, and the dewy starlight; while Maurice now and then dipped an oar in the water and watched the sweet, fair girl's face opposite him.

"I am glad you are in no hurry to go home," he said, bending forward to speak in a low tone. "It is as lovely as a dream here. I feel as if I were in a dream, and — I don't want to wake up," he added, half laughing.

"Don't you? But perhaps—you know dreams are deceitful; and they last such a little while! It would be better *never* to dream, I think," murmured Lucy softly, glancing at him from her sweet blue eyes.

"Yes, life is so hard and cold when we awake from our beautiful dreams," Maurice said, in the same tone. "When I awake—I mean to-night—and we land and go home where there are lights and a crowd of people, everything will be changed. *You* will change. I shall not have you all to myself. You will look at other people and talk to them—not to me. I have known you so short a time that I have no claim on you, and I shall be nothing to you there among your other friends."

Lucy looked up, puzzled. He was not laughing. His face was grave, his eyes were fixed earnestly upon her, his tone was eager. For

a moment, she was silent; then she spoke hurriedly and impulsively:

"Yes, yes, I shall change," she cried. "I shall be only a silly, fashionable young lady when we reach 'the lights.' You won't care about talking to me then. And so—now that we are at the landing-place, you had better leave us here, and just go home and remember me as a dream only."

Maurice laughed and held out his hand to steady her as the boat touched the shore.

"I am in earnest," she said eagerly, rising and putting her hand in his. "There, Cousin Maurice. Good-bye. *Won't* you say good-night and go home again?"

Her tone was a strange mixture of impetuosity, earnestness, and entreaty, and Maurice stood there looking down into her soft eyes, smiling but not speaking. Go away! With that light velvet touch on his hand—with those clear eyes gleaming in the starlight—that soft voice thrilling in his ear! And yet—like a flash came into his memory the refrain of John Bassett's warning:

"A look's enough to ruin you
Oh, fly from Lady Rose!"

For one instant he actually meditated taking her advice, and rowing back to Riverside against the current; but the next he laughed at himself, and answered gaily.

"No, Miss Lucy, I shall go to Belmont, and risk even the danger of finding you out."

"Very well," said Lucy, her tone suddenly changing to a light one; "I have warned you, and I am not responsible now for any of the consequences. And I am very glad you didn't take my advice."

"You know I *could not* take it," Maurice said, bending his head and speaking in low, earnest tones.

A light laugh was the girl's only answer.

"How shall you get home?" she asked.

"I shall get a horse at Belmont. The boat can be brought up to Riverside in the morning."

So they walked home through the quiet meadow, and up the terraced garden to Belmont, Lucy's hand resting on his arm, and Emma springing on before them. Maurice Wynne was in love with her: it is of no use to conceal the fact, or to laugh at him for it. They talked very little. It was happiness enough for Maurice to wander silently under the starry sky, with the cool, dewy night around him, and that soft little hand on his arm; and Miss Lucy's thoughts were not exactly such as she would have liked to speak aloud.

"I wonder what insane impulse prompted me to say what I did to Maurice Wynne? Of course he has fallen in love with me!—but so have

others, just as good, and clever, and handsome as he, and why should I care? And yet, he seems too earnest to be played with like the rest. I wish I could be staid and good!"

Poor Maurice Wynne! For the next six weeks he basked in the sunshine of Lucy Lenoir's bright eyes, and was alternately wretched or happy just as it pleased her to make him. He who had always "hated flirts as he did the deuce," was hopelessly in love with "the most unconscionable flirt on earth." Mr. John Bassett had the pleasure of looking on at the process.

There were morning saunterings, afternoon lingerings, evening gatherings. Looked upon as a son of the house and as Lucy's cousin, Mrs. Lenoir thought nothing, and did not interfere. Besides, she had promised Lucy's hand to somebody else: in her foolish old mind that made it all secure.

One evening Lucy, sweet and fair and gentle, sat at the piano, her hands stealing softly over the keys, just making music enough to cover the sound of Maurice Wynne's voice, her eyes now dropped thoughtfully, now raised shyly and seriously to his face. Maurice was bending towards her, speaking eagerly, with a flush on his cheeks and his eyes shining like stars.

"She is fooling him as she fooled me," thought Jack, who was looking on. "I wonder what she's saying to him now?"

This was what she was saying, with her shy, sweet eyes raised to his:

"Oh, yes, you know I like you ever so much. More than you deserve, you impatient, obstinate young man."

"Then why won't you give me the promise I ask, Lucy?" returned Maurice. "And why do you say 'like' instead of love?" he added suddenly.

"Because I—now Maurice if you look at me so, I don't know *what* I am saying. You are so impulsive; and I am trying to keep my senses. Because, don't you know, it is such a little while since we first met, and we—you may be mistaken. It would be so dreadful to discover after—after a long time, that you did not really love me."

"Lucy! My darling! Do you suppose I can be mistaken? I never loved any one but you, and I never shall. You drive me mad with these doubts and scruples."

Lucy looked down, sighed, and hesitated.

"Lucy, trust me," pleaded Maurice passionately. "You are dearer to me than my own life. I am sure you know that; and you are trying me almost too hardly now. Won't you, please, be honest with me, dear? If you really love me, promise me *now* to be my wife."

Lucy's eyes met his again. Such deep, true, earnest eyes, his were, and hers—well, perhaps, it was not altogether acting—but some-

thing so like real love shone out of their soft blue depths that Maurice started, and his heart beat high with ecstasy.

"Lucy, will you promise?" he repeated breathlessly.

Her little hand was clasped in his now, for he had seized it. She felt the tremor of intense excitement and passion that shook his frame. The colour came hotly into her cheeks; her own heart beat quickly. The next instant she recovered herself with a start, almost of terror, and wondered what she could be thinking of.

"There!" she said, breaking suddenly into a light laugh, and abruptly drawing her hand away, "we are getting too serious. The children want me to play for them; they are going to dance. We won't talk nonsense any more, Mr. Wynne."

"Lucy, my love," said Mrs. Lenoir that night, as she sat and watched her daughter brushing out her golden hair, "I don't often have to speak to you about such things, but—do be more careful about Maurice Wynne. I have never seen you so—unguarded—in your conduct. One would think he was quite *épris* with you, and that you—you encouraged it; but I know you better, of course. I am afraid it would displease Mr. Golding, my darling. Have you written to Mr. Golding since you were here?"

"No, mamma."

"Do write then, child. He will surely be offended; and I know he has written to you. Think of his wealth; and—good-night, love," and she sailed languidly away.

Lucy tossed back her hair, as her mother left the room; and saw reflected in the glass, cheeks as red as fire and eyes flashing angrily.

"Mr. Golding! always Mr. Golding and his wealth!" she muttered. "I am as very a slave as ever was bought and sold. I wish I had never seen him. Yes, I do! I hate him so bitterly. Horrid, pompous man! He is as different from——" Here the young lady's flashing eyes suddenly filled with tears, and she turned abruptly away from the mirror.

"I *must* be more careful," she sighed. "Mamma is right. After all, it is but a flirtation with Maurice Wynne."

A day or two after this, Mr. John Basset, entering the gate at Riverside, met its master riding out of it.

"Which way?" asked Jack. "I won't come in now: we may as well take a ride in company?"

"I am going to Belmont," said Maurice. He did not offer to turn back, and the two rode on together. Jack glanced at his friend's face in the sunlight of the afternoon, and saw that it was worn, pale, and moody.

These two or three days of coldness and indifference from Lucy had made the change. Jack guessed it all too well.

"Maurice—old fellow!" he burst out presently, "don't look like that. No woman in the world is worth it."

Maurice raised his head quickly. "What are you talking of?" he asked, his face flushing.

"I'm not a bat," responded Jack. "I know what she's doing. It's the old game. She won't say 'yes,' and she doesn't say 'no.' It's the most maddening thing on earth. Don't let her trifle with you, Maurice. You are too good to be made a fool and a plaything of by any woman alive. See here! Just turn round and go home—or go home with me, and let's both forget her. She's not worth a thought from either of us."

"I am going to see her once more," said Mr. Wynne, turning his manly face straight on Jack's. "It will be for the last time, unless—" He broke off with a fierce glitter in his eyes. "I will have an answer from her to day, yes or no, by heaven!"

"Very well. I wish you success, old fellow," said Jack, rather drearily as he turned his horse. "I've given her up long ago, and I'd help you now, with all my heart, if I could."

"Thank you, Jack. You are the best fellow in the world," Maurice said, heartily wringing the hand Jack held out. Then they parted, Jack riding thoughtfully homeward, and Maurice galloping swiftly toward Belmont on his mission to Miss Lenoir. But he found that she steadily avoided him.

"Lucy, will you go with me for a farewell row on the river this evening?" he asked at dinner, under cover of a great deal of laughter that was going around the table.

"A *farewell* row?" she returned quickly—she was sitting next him. "Why do you say that? I am not going away for a week yet."

"No, but it is probable that I shall be going away to-morrow," said Maurice, quietly.

"You!" The words seemed to strike her. "Where shall you be going?"

"Abroad. I have had nearly enough of home. Will you go for this farewell row?"

"Ye—yes. If mamma will let me. You needn't laugh. I do try to mind her sometimes."

"But you have been with me a dozen times without asking her. Why should you be so particular now? We will row up to Riverside and float down. Remember, this is my last evening."

"I'll go, then," said Lucy, laughing, and colouring a little. "Emma, or one of them, can go too."

But he did not intend to have Emma or anybody else with them; and he generally managed to maintain his own will. So they went up to Riverside alone.

The sun was nearly down when the little boat left the Riverside landing, and began its slow, delicious journey down with the current. The con-

versation between the lady and gentleman had been somewhat restrained, and at times had ceased entirely, for Maurice was silent and absent, and Lucy unusually quiet. At last she took refuge from the awkward silence in singing. Maurice listened, and watched her fair, sweet face and the little white hand, with its glittering diamond, that trailed idly through the water, but he scarcely uttered half a dozen sentences between Riverside and Belmont.

The sun's last glittering ray had left the water, and a white moon-bean silvered the ripples in its stead.

At last the island was passed and the Belmont landing came in sight. Lucy stopped her low, soft singing ; and, drawing on her shawl, took up her hat, and prepared to land.

"You haven't been very polite to me, Mr. Wynne," she said, with an air of injured innocence. "You have let me entertain myself entirely, and you've no idea how fearfully I have bored myself."

"Have you?" said Maurice, smiling. "I am sorry. But I was rather afraid to speak to you lest what I had to say would 'bore' you even more fearfully."

"That is not likely. I don't remember, with all your faults, that you have ever bored me, sir," she said, saucily.

"You are very kind," gravely answered Maurice.

The boat swept on still, keeping the middle of the stream, and Lucy looked at Maurice, a little surprised at not seeing his oars dip in the water.

"Are you dreaming, Mr. Wynne?" she asked at last. "Don't you see we are passing our landing-place?"

"Yes, I see it," replied Maurice with composure.

"But—I thought we were going home. It is too late to go any arther."

No answer from Maurice, Another minute, and the landing-place was left behind.

"How provoking you are !" exclaimed Lucy, tossing her hat on the seat impatiently. "You know we ought to be at home. How far do you mean to go?"

"That depends entirely on yourself," said Maurice, looking at her with grave, quiet eyes.

"On me? Then, of course, we turn back at once."

"I mean that we can go back as soon as you have answered the question I asked you some time ago."

"What question, Mr. Wynne? Oh, just see how lovely the moon-light is on the water!" Lucy cried, with sudden animation.

"I asked you if you would marry me, and you did not give me any answer," Maurice said, steadily.

"Did you? Didn't I?" Lucy returned with so innocent a face that Maurice could not help smiling.

"Exactly. And I would like an answer now, if you please, Miss Lenoir."

"Miss Lenoir!" repeated Lucy, with a sweet, reproachful glance.

Maurice bit his lip and looked away from the fair, winning face. He dared not meet those soft eyes, for he knew his assumed coldness would yield if he did. He would not speak, and they floated on down the stream.

"This is very pleasant," said Lucy, presently. "I enjoy the coolness and quiet very much; but, indeed, it is time we were at home. Let us turn. Mamma will be in a fit."

"When you have said 'yes' or 'no' to my question," answered Maurice, as quietly as ever.

Lucy laughed, and glanced at him with mirthful eyes. "You are not in earnest," she said, incredulously.

"Never more so," was the curt answer: and Lucy saw from his grave, determined face that he spoke the truth. She sat looking at him in silence for a few moments, leaning forward and resting her chin in her soft, rosy palm. Very much puzzled, was she, what to do.

"I *can't* say 'yes,'" she thought; "and if I say 'no,' then I shall never see him again, and I do—oh I do like him! He is so true, and he loves me so dearly. Oh, dear, what must I say! And there he sits, as calm as a marble statue—only I know that it is all put on. If I touched his hand I should find it quivering. 'Nobody loves me as he does. Oh, if I were only safe at home! Heaven knows what foolish thing I may do under the spell of those glorious eyes. Suppose I were to try some coaxing!'"

Then aloud, in a low, soft tone: "Maurice, don't be so unkind, please. Take me home, won't you?"

"When you have answered me—'yes' or 'no!'" came the monotonous answer.

For ten minutes more Lucy tried the coaxing process, all to no purpose. Maurice was inexorable.

There followed a long silence. The boat drifted more rapidly down the quickening current.

"Mr. Wynne," she said, coldly, "do you know you are taking an unwarrantable liberty with me?—an *unpardonable* liberty. Whether you are in jest or earnest, this has lasted long enough. I shall be very much offended if you do not instantly turn toward home."

"Listen, Lucy," he said, the hot colour flushing his brow. "I cannot bear this suspense longer—I shall go mad with the uncertainty if you do not answer me."

Lucy smiled scornfully. "This tragedy is a little out of place, Mr. Wynne. Your audience is not an appreciative one. I never liked or believed in extravagances of the sort. Genuine feeling is less demonstrative."

"Lucy!—Miss Lenoir!" he retorted, all his indignation aroused. "Do you know how cruel you are? It is you who are jesting now. You know I am sincere in my love for you. Heaven knows I wish I were not." He spoke so bitterly that Lucy was silenced. She sat there feeling decidedly guilty and uncomfortable. The boat swept on more and more rapidly, the stars shone out faintly overhead; and there was Maurice, still, pale, and silent as a statue before her.

A whip-poor-will uttered its melancholy cry on the shore; the waters rippled past the bow of the boat. These were the only sounds in the cold, dewy air. Lucy grew more than uncomfortable: depressed and nervous. At last she suddenly turned, threw her arms on the back of the cushioned seat, dropped her head upon them, and burst into a of tears.

In an instant Maurice was by her side, kneeling. Claspings her unresisting hand, he entreated her to forgive him and—answer him.

But she snatched away her hand and pushed him from her.

"No, no! Go away. You must not touch me. I cannot forgive you," she sobbed. "If you loved me you would not be so cruel. I can't answer you now. I can't think. Do go back. You'll upset the boat. I tell you I will not be forced to say anything I don't want to say."

"But, Lucy, I want you to say what you *do* want to."

"I'll tell you to-morrow. Ah, please let us go home now," implored Lucy, fancying she detected signs of yielding in his tone. But he only shook his head and went back to his seat.

There was a silence in the little boat again. The moon rose higher, and the boat's track turned to molten silver.

"What is that?" asked Lucy, suddenly raising her head, as a low, ominous roar sounded in the distance, above the ripple of the current.

"The rapids," he answered, carelessly.

"The rapids!" she cried, struck with terror. "Oh, Maurice! We shall be drowned—or else dashed to pieces on those dreadful rocks."

Maurice did not answer: and she thought his own face grew paler and sterner in the moonlight.

"Maurice, I believe you are mad!" she cried, in great alarm.

"Perhaps I am. I am not at all sure."

The boat whirled on, and the roar of the falls grew louder—loud as thunder—in Lucy's terrified ears.

"Oh, Maurice, it frightens me so!" she exclaimed. "Let us turn back before it is too late!"

He put his hand on the oars, and then leaned toward her gravely.

"Lucy Lenoir, I ask you again if you will be my wife," he said, in a low, distinct tone. It was almost a whisper, yet Lucy heard it above the cataract's roar and the loud beating of her own heart.

The boat seemed whirling on to the verge of the fall. Around and before it the waters foamed and dashed, white as snow in the moonlight.

"Speak quickly, or it will be too late. Answer me, Lucy," rang out Maurice's stern voice: "will you be my wife?"

One instant longer Lucy hesitated. Then, raising her head suddenly, the blood rushing back in a crimson tide to her pale cheek, and her eyes flashing with anger and pride, she spoke at last, sharply and decisively.

"No, I will not. You know it has only been a flirtation."

There came a shock, a lurch of the boat, a dash of water over her face, and--what followed she did not know. She closed her eyes with a great shudder of horror, and tried to pray for mercy, and shivered in expectation of the fatal, horrible plunge into the foaming water. But it did not come: and, opening her eyes again--there was Maurice rowing swiftly up the stream, and the roar of the falls dying away in the distance.

She did not look at Maurice Wynne's face. She could not speak to him--but hiding her own face again on her folded arms, she sat trembling, shivering, and silently crying, while the boat flew swiftly through the water.

Once the dip of the oars ceased, and Lucy felt her shawl, which had fallen off, wrapped carefully around her shivering shoulders. She tried to say "Thank you," but her lips would not move. Then she began to hate herself for her heartlessness and insincerity, and to wish that she could atone for it. But it was too late. Too late to undo the mischief she had done--or to retract the words she had spoken. Strangely enough *that* thought was the bitterest of all; for she loved him, and she knew it, better than any one on earth.

But there was no help for it now. So she kept her face down and tried to stop crying: and then the boat touched the landing, and she heard Maurice springing on shore.

"He would serve me right if he pushed off the boat and let me drift back to the falls and drown," she thought, in her abject penitence. But, instead of that, he gave her his hand with grave courtesy, helped her from the boat, and walked quietly beside her through the meadow. She stole a glance at his face. It was very sad and very grave, but he did not look angry or resentful.

Lucy's eyes filled with tears again. What had happened to this "un-conscionable flirt?" There was not an atom of coquetry left in her heart now, and she would have given the world to put her hand softly on his arm and say, pleadingly, "Maurice, forgive me if you can. I will do anything, if you will only love me."

Mrs. Lenoir pounced upon them at the top of the shrubbery. "Lucy, is it you at last! Where have you been? How dreadfully

imprudent !—it's quite damp ! Maurice, how could you keep her out so long ? I have been nearly distracted ! And Mr. Golding has been here an hour, Lucy ! It was inexcusable in you to absent yourself, when you knew he was coming."

"It cannot make much difference, mamma," said Lucy, in a strange, languid, cold tone. "An hour is a very little while. We shall surely see enough of each other for all the rest of our lives !"

"My dear ! How strangely you are talking ! Do come with me quickly ; he is already angry. I think you should be told that they are engaged, Mr. Wynne."

Mrs. Lenoir hurried her daughter to the house, leaving Maurice stunned and bewildered. Engaged to Mr. Golding ! Why had it been kept from him ? Just for a moment he hesitated—to pass on, or go away to his own home. Then he threw back his head proudly, and entered the drawing-rooms.

Lights were there ; guests were there : amidst the latter, a pompous-looking, common-place, plain young man, resplendent in diamonds. Rings, studs, sleeve-links : all were of the first water. Mr. Golding seemed to think it well to favour the world's admiring eyes with evidences of his wealth and taste.

But Miss Lenoir, who had gone to her chamber, did not come down again. Her mother made a lame kind of excuse to Mr. Golding about a "sad headache."

"Do you stay here to-night, Maurice ?" asked his step-mother.

"Yes," he answered. He meant to see the play played out.

The young lady appeared in the morning, pale, subdued, listless. Maurice Wynne simply bowed to her. Mr. Golding took both her hands with emprossement.

"Will you give me the pleasure of a walk with you, Miss Lenoir ?" asked the latter, as they rose from breakfast. And Lucy, turning white and red, and seeing no way of escape, went.

But the walk, taken in the more shaded part of the grounds, did not appear to be productive of pleasure. They quarrelled. And Lucy flinging back to him the diamond ring she had been in the habit of wearing, told him that their semi-engagement was at an end, for that she could never be his wife.

Excited, panting, breathless, sobbing, she flew back to the house, and encountered Mr. Wynne in the hall. Startled at her emotion, he drew her into the library and closed the door. The green blinds were down before the open window ; the room was cool, shady, sweet with the perfume of flowers.

"Now tell me what all this is," he said, as he placed her in a seat.

"It is only that I have had a scene with Mr. Golding," she said, in her sobbing emotion. "I have told him that I cannot be his wife."

"Is it true that you are engaged to him ?"

"Partly so. Mamma and he made the agreement between them I did not say it should not be."

"And you find you do not love him?"

"Love!" she repeated in disdainful pain.

"Could you love another, Lucy. Me?"

Lucy did not raise her eyes or make any answer. She was crying soft happy tears. Maurice Wynne read the signs aright, and caught her blushing face to his.

"You nearly drowned me yesterday, you know," she whispered.

He laughed a little. "No I did not, Lucy; I knew what I was about. Do you think I would bring my darling into any real danger? No, Lucy, whether you were to be my wife or any other man's, I could not do that."

"You will never be cross to me, or frighten me again, will you, Maurice?" she murmured.

But what kind of answer Mr. Maurice might have made to this appeal was cut short by the entrance of Mrs. Lenoir. Her face was inflamed with anger, her curls stood out: she had evidently heard the ill-news. Lucy started up and hid her face on her mother's disturbed bosom.

"Oh, mamma, don't scold me, don't be angry! I could not marry him."

"He is worth a million at least!" shrieked Mrs. Lenoir. "Why did you not say no at first, if you meant to say it at all? It is dreadful behaviour."

"I had not seen any one then that I—liked," stammered Miss Lucy.

"Not seen any one you liked! When you know that you always had a crowd of young men dangling after you!"

"Oh, but I—I never cared for any one of *them*!"

"Well, Mr. Wynne, I suppose it is to you we owe all this," cried the angry lady: and Lucy bent lower her blushing face. "You have gained a great flirt—and I say it, though she is my daughter."

"I am not afraid of her flirting, Mrs. Lenoir, once she is my wife. When love steps in, flirting ends."

"Well, sir, it is a wretched calamity altogether. Quite a million of money!—and no end of diamonds."



M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

EDMUND EVANS.

WITH A FALSE KEY.

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THE ARGOSY.

JUNE 2, 1873.

THE MASTER OF GREYLANDS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XVI.

OPENING THE BUREAU.

GREYLANDS' CLIFF was a high cliff: and the huts of the fishermen, nestling in nooks on its side, rendered it highly picturesque. Many a lover of art and nature, seeking a subject for his pencil, had sketched this cliff; some few had made it into a grand painting and sent it forth to charm the world.

The two highest cottages on it were of a superior order. Even they were not built on the top; but close under it. They stood nearly side by side; a jutting of rock stretching out between them. The walls were white: and to the side of one of these dwellings—the one nearest the sea—there was a small square piece of sunk level that served now for a little garden. Miss Hallet, to whom the cottage belonged, had caused some loads of good earth to be brought up; she planted a few flowers, a few shrubs, a few sweet herbs, and so nursed the little spot into a miniature garden. Miss Hallet herself was seated this afternoon just within the open door of the dwelling, darning a rent in a pillow-case. The door opened straight upon this room; a pretty parlour, very well furnished. The kitchen was behind; and two bed-chambers were above. Not a large house, thinks the reader. No: but it was regarded as large by the poorer dwellers on the cliff, and Miss Hallet was looked up to almost as a lady. Having a small but sufficient income, she lived quietly and peaceably, mixing but little with other people.

She had been a lady's maid in early life; and the lady she served bequeathed to her an annuity. Miss Hallet had then saved money of her own; she came to Greylands, her native place, bought the cottage on the cliff, and settled herself in it. Her brother, the captain of a

small fruit-vessel trading to Spain, was drowned one night with all his hands : he left two orphan children, a son and daughter, not provided for, and Miss Hallet adopted them. George, the boy, took to the sea in spite of all she could say or do. He put himself on board Tom Dance's boat, and went out fishing with him. In vain Miss Hallet pointed out to him that he was superior to anything of the kind, and ought to look out for a higher calling in life. George would not listen. Quitting his aunt's roof—for he grew tired of the continual contentions she provoked—he went to lodge in the village, and made apparently a good living. But the treacherous sea took him, just as it had in like manner taken his father. One night during a storm, a ship was sighted in distress : Tom Dance, who was as good-hearted as he was reckless, put off in his boat with George Hallet to the rescue, and George never came back again. Handsome, light-hearted, well-mannered George Hallet was drowned. That was nearly two years ago. He was just twenty years of age ; and was said to have already been given a share in Tom Dance's earnings. Tom Dance owned his own substantial boat ; and his hauls of fish were good ; no doubt profitable also, for he was always flush of money. His son, a silent kind of young man, was his partner now, and went out in the boat with him as George Hallet used to do. They lived in one of the cottages on the beach. Old Mrs. Dance, Tom's mother, had her dwelling in a solitary place underneath the perpendicular cliff : not on the village side of it, as the other dwellings were, but facing the sea. It was a lonely spot, inaccessible at times when the tides were unusually high. Tom Dance, who was generous to his mother, and kept her well, would have had her quit it for a more sociably situated habitation : but the old woman was attached to her many-years homestead, and would not listen to him. When we have grown old in a home, we like it better than any other, no matter what may be its drawbacks.

Miss Hallet finished the darn, and turned the pillow-case about to look for another. She was a tall, angular lady of fifty, with a cold, hard countenance ; three or four prim flat curls of gray hair peeped out from beneath her cap on the brows ; tortoiseshell spectacles were stretched across her well-shaped nose. She had a fawn-coloured woollen shawl crossed about her for warmth—for, though a nice spring day, it was hardly the weather yet for one of her age to sit exposed to the open air.

"Why, this must have been cut !"

The spectacles had rested upon an almost imperceptible fray, whose edges were so keen and close as to impart a suspicion that it had never come by natural wear and tear. Miss Hallet drew in her thin lips grimly.

"And since the wash, too ;" she continued, when the gaze was over. "Jane must know something of this. She is frightfully heedless."

Threading a fresh needleful of the soft fine darning cotton, she was applying herself to repair the damage, when footsteps were heard ascending the narrow zigzag path. Another minute, and Tom Dance's son loomed into view : a short, sturdy, well-meaning, but shy and silent youth of twenty.

"Father's duty, Miss Hallet, and he have sent up this fish, if you'd be pleased to accept him," said the young man, showing a good-sized fish with large scales, resting on a wicker-tray. Miss Hallet was charmed. Her hard face relaxed into as much of a smile as it could relax.

"Dear me, what a beautiful fish ! How good your father is, Wally ! Always thinking of somebody ! Give him my best thanks back again. You have just got in, I suppose ?"

"Just ten minutes ago," responded Wally. "Been out two tides."

"Well, I wonder your father does not begin to think more of his ease—and so well off as he must be ! The night seems the same to him for work as the day."

"Catches the best fish under the moon," shortly remarked the young man, as he handed over the wicker tray.

Miss Hallet took it into the house, and brought it back to him without the fish. Mr. Walter Dance caught the tray with a silent nod, and sped down the steep path at a rate that, to unaccustomed eyes, might have seemed to put his neck in peril.

Barely had Miss Hallet taken up her sewing again, when another visitor appeared. This one's footsteps were lighter and softer than the young man's, and she was seen almost as soon as heard. A dark-haired, quick-speaking young woman in black. It was Harriet, waiting-maid to Mrs. Castlemaine.

"Is your niece at home, Miss Hallet ?"

"No. She's gone to Stilborough. How are you, Harriet ?"

"Oh, I'm all right, thank you. What a cliff this is to climb up !—a'most takes one's breath away. Gone to Stilborough, is she ? Well, that's a bother !"

"What did you want with her ?"

"Has she done any of them han'kerchers, do you know ?" returned the young woman, without replying to the direct question.

"I can't say. I know she has begun them. Would you like to come in and sit down ?"

"I've no time for sitting down. My missis has sent me off here on the spur of the moment : and when she sends one out on an errand for herself one had best not linger, you know. Besides, I must get back to dress the ladies."

"Oh, must you," indifferently remarked Miss Hallet ; who rarely evinced curiosity as to her neighbours' doings, or encouraged gossip upon trifles.

"They are all going off to a dinner party at Stilborough ; and missis took it into her head just now that she'd use one of her new fine cambric han'kerchers," continued Harriet. "So she sent me off here to get one."

"But Mrs. Castlemaine is surely not short of fine handkerchiefs !" cried Miss Hallet.

"Short of fine han'kerchers !—why, she's got a drawer full. It was just a freak for a new thing ; that's all."

"Well, I do not know whether one is done, Harriet. Jane has been working at one ; she was at it last night ; but I did not notice whether she finished it."

"Can't you look, please, Miss Hallet ?"

Miss Hallet rose from her chair and went up stairs. She came back empty handed.

"I don't see the handkerchiefs anywhere in Jane's room, Harriet. I daresay she has locked them up in her work-drawer : she has taken to lock up the drawer lately, I've noticed. If you could wait a few minutes she might be in : she'll not be long now."

"But I can't wait ; they start off at five," was the girl's answer : "and the missis and Miss Ethel have both got to be dressed. So I'll say good afternoon, ma'am."

"Good afternoon," repeated Miss Hallet. "Should Jane return in time, if she happens to have one of the handkerchiefs done, she shall bring it up."

The young woman turned away with a brisk step, but not at the speed Walter Dance had used. By-and-by, quite an hour later, Jane Hallet came in.

A slender, lady-like, nice-looking girl of nineteen ; with a fair, soft, gentle face, mild blue eyes, hair light and bright, and almost child-like features. Jane's good looks, of which she was no doubt conscious, and Jane's propensity to dress too much, were a source of continual vexation to Miss Hallet : so to say, a stumbling-block in her path. Jane wore a dark blue merino dress, a very pretty grey cloak, with a hood and tassels, and a straw bonnet trimmed with blue. Miss Hallet groaned.

"And you must walk off in all those best things to-day, Jane ! Just to go to the wool shop at Stilborough ! I wonder what will become of you !"

"It was so fine a day, aunt," came the cheerful, apologetic answer. "I have not hurt them."

"You've not done them good. Are any of those handkerchiefs of Mrs. Castlemaine's finished ?" resumed the aunt, after a pause.

"One is."

"Then, you must go up at once with it to Greylands' Rest. Don't take your cloak off—unless, indeed, you'd like to change it for your old

one, which would be the right thing to do," added Miss Hallet snappishly. "And your bonnet too!"

Jane stood still for a moment: something like a cloud passed over her face. She did not particularly care to go to Greylands' Rest.

"I am tired with my walk, aunt."

"That can't be helped: you must take the handkerchief all the same," said Miss Hallet. And she explained the reason, and that she had promised to send one if it were done.

"You will be in time: it is hardly half-past four. The maid said the family were to start at five."

Jane went up to her chamber; a small room that she took care to make look as pretty as she could. A chest of drawers stood by the bed. Taking a key from her pocket, she opened the top long drawer, the only one that was locked, and lifted out the paper of handkerchiefs. Half a dozen handkerchiefs of the finest and softest cambric, almost like a spider's web, that Mrs. Castlemaine had given to her to hem-stitch.

Any little job of this kind Jane Hallet was glad to undertake. The money helped to buy her clothes. Otherwise she was entirely dependent upon her aunt. The Grey Ladies had taught her all kinds of fine needlework. When she had none of that to do—and she did not have it often—she filled up her leisure time in knitting lambs' wool socks for a shop at Stilborough.

Snatching a moment to look in the glass and put her hair in order, Jane went down with the handkerchief, neatly folded in thin white paper. All the girl's instincts were nice: she was in fact too much of a lady for her position.

"I thought you might be changing those smart things for your everyday ones," crossly spoke Miss Hallet, as Jane went through the sitting-room. "Mrs. Castlemaine will look askance at your finery."

"There was no time for it, aunt," replied Jane, a sudden blush dyeing her face, as she hastened out.

She ran down the cliff, went past the Grey Nunnery, and so up Chapel Lane—which was the back way to Greylands' Rest, and not the front. It was not her wish or intention to see Mrs. Castlemaine, if she could avoid it; or any of the family. Presenting herself at the back door, she asked for Harriet. One of the other servants took her into a small parlour, and said she would tell the lady's maid. Five o'clock had struck before Harriet bustled in.

"The han'kercher, is it? Mrs. Castlemaine 'll be glad. When she sets her mind on a thing, she do set it. Come along, Jane Hallet, she wants to see you."

No opportunity was afforded to Jane of saying no, and she followed Harriet along the passages. Mrs. Castlemaine, her rich black silk dinner dress covered by a large warm shawl, stood in the hall. Ethel

Reene, in black net and white ribbons, and wearing her scarlet cloak, was also there. The carriage waited outside. Jane went forward shrinkingly, her face turning pale and red alternately.

"I just want to see it before I take it," said Mrs. Castlemaine, holding out her hand for the handkerchief. "Is it tumbled much? Oh, I see; it is very nice, quite smooth. How well you have kept it, Jane Hallet! Here, Harriet, I don't want this one now."

She tossed back an embroidered handkerchief to the maid, and swept out to the carriage. Ethel smiled at Jane, as she followed her stepmother.

"I'm sure it is very good of you to come up with it for mamma," she said, feeling in her sensitive heart that Mrs. Castlemaine had not given one word of thanks to the girl. Mr. Castlemaine came down stairs, an overcoat on his arm. He nodded kindly to Jane as he passed, and inquired after Miss Hallet.

They stood in the porch, watching the carriage away, Miles and Harriet. Jane was a little behind, just within the hall.

"I thought Mr. Harry was going," observed Harriet. "What has took him, not to go?"

"Don't know," said Miles. "One never can be certain of Mr. Harry—whether he goes to a place or whether he doesn't go."

"Perhaps he has walked on," remarked Harriet carelessly, as she turned round. "I say, Jane Hallet, you'll stay and take a dish o' tea, now you are here. We are just going to have it."

But Jane Hallet hastily declined. No persuasion, apparently, would induce her to accept the invitation; and she departed at once. Half an hour later Madame Guise and her pupil came home, from a long walk.

"Have they all gone?" enquired Madame of one of the housemaids.

"Oh, dear yes, ma'am. Half an hour ago."

Now, this answer deceived Charlotte Guise. She knew the dinner engagement had been accepted by Mr. and Mrs. Castlemaine, their son, and Ethel. She had no thought or idea but what they would keep it: and in saying to the servant "Have they all gone," she comprised the four and understood that she was answered accordingly.

She and Flora took tea together. The child was growing somewhat more tractable than she used to be. Not much as yet; it was just a little shade of improvement. Flora was always better when her mamma was away; and Madame Guise had no trouble with her on this night. She even went to bed at the appointed hour, eight o'clock, without rebellion, after a regalement of what she was particularly fond of—bread and jam.

"I will take a slice of this bread and butter and jam also," remarked Madame to Miles; "and then I shall not trouble you to bring in sup-

per for me. It will be a nice change. We like this confiture much in my country."

So Madame took her supper that evening with Flora, and afterwards wrote a letter. At nine o'clock she rang the bell to say she was going up to her room for the night, feeling tired, and should require nothing more. Miles, who had answered the bell, saw her go up with her candle. He put out the sitting-room lights for safety, and went back to the kitchen. His master and mistress were not expected home before half-past eleven.

In her room stood Charlotte Guise, white as a sheet. She was contemplating a deed that night, from which, in spite of what she deemed her justification for it, she shrank in horror. It was no less a step than the opening with a false key the private bureau of Mr. Castlemaine.

Some little time, the best part of a fortnight, had elapsed since that walk of hers to Stilborough; and Marie had had the measles—"very kindly," as Mr. Parker and the Grey Sisters expressed it—and was well again. Telling a plausible story of the loss of her keys to a Stilborough locksmith that day, she had obtained from him a key that would undo if necessary half the locks in Mr. Castlemaine's house. No opportunity had presented itself for using it until now. Such an opportunity as this, when the house was deserted by all, save the servants, might not speedily occur again.

She stood in her chamber, trembling and nervous, the light from the candle reflected on her face. The staircase clock struck the quarter past nine, and her heart beat faster as she heard it. It was the signal she had been waiting for.

For the servants would now be settled at their supper, and were not likely soon to get up from it. Nine o'clock was the nominal hour for the meal: but, as she chanced to know, they rarely sat down to it much before a quarter past. With the house free and nothing to do, they would not hurry themselves over it to-night. Half an hour—nay, an hour, she knew she might freely reckon upon while they were shut up at table in the comfortable kitchen, talking and eating.

Charlotte Guise opened the door and stood to listen. Not a sound save the ticking of the clock broke the stillness. She was quite alone. Flora was fast asleep in her room in the front corridor, next to Mrs. Castlemaine's chamber, for she had been in to see, and she had taken the precaution of turning the key on the child for safety. Yet another minute she stood listening, candle in hand. Then, swiftly crossing the passage, she stole into the study through the double doors.

The same orderly, uncluttered room that she had seen before. No papers lay about, no deeds were left out that could be of use to her. Three books were stacked upon the side table; a newspaper lay on a chair; and that was positively all. The fire had long ago gone out; on the mantel-piece was a box of matches.

Putting down the candle, Charlotte Guise took out her key, and tried the bureau. It opened at once. She swung back the heavy lid and waited a moment to recover herself: her lips were white, her breath came in gasps. Oh, apart from the baseness, the dishonour of the act, which was very present to her mind, what if she were to be caught at it?"

Papers were there *en masse*. The drawers and pigeon-holes seemed to be full of them. So far as she could judge from a short examination—and she did not dare to give a long one—these papers had reference to business transactions, to sales of goods and commercial matters—which she rather wondered at, but did not understand. But of deeds she could see none.

What did Charlotte Guise expect to find? What did she promise herself by this secret search? In truth, she could not have told. She wanted to get some record of her husband's fate, some proof that should compromise the Master of Greylands. She would also have been glad to find some will, or deed of gift, that should show to her how Greylands' Rest had been really left by old Anthony Castlemaine: whether to his son Basil or to James. If to Basil, why there would be a proof—as she, poor thing, deemed it—of the manner in which James Castlemaine had dealt with his nephew, and its urging motive.

No, there was nothing. Opening this bundle of papers, rapidly glancing into that, turning over the other, she could find absolutely nothing: and in the revulsion of feeling the disappointment caused, she said to herself how worse than foolish she had been to expect to find anything: how utterly devoid of reason she must be, to suppose Mr. Castlemaine would preserve mementos of an affair so dangerous. And where he kept his law papers, or parchments relating to his estate, she could not tell, but certainly they were not in the bureau.

Not daring to stay longer, for near upon half an hour must have elapsed, she replaced the things as she had found them, so far as she could remember. All was done save one drawer; a small drawer, at the foot, next the slab. It had but a few receipted bills in it: there was one from a saddler, one from a coach-maker, and such like. The drawer was very shallow; and, in closing it, the bills were forced out again. Charlotte Guise, in her trepidation and hurry, pulled the drawer forwards too forcibly, and pulled it out of its frame.

Had it chanced by accident—this little contretemps? Ah no. When do these strange trifles, pregnant with events of moment, occur by chance? At the top of the drawer appeared a narrow, closed compartment, opening with a slide. Charlotte drew the slide back, and saw within it a folded letter and some small article wrapped in paper.

The letter, which she opened and read, proved to be the one written by Basil Castlemaine on his death-bed—the same letter that had been brought over by young Anthony, and given to his uncle. There was

nothing much to note in it—save that Basil assumed throughout it that the estate was his, and would be his son's after him. Folding it again, she opened the bit of paper, and there shone out a diamond ring that flashed in the candle's rays.

Charlotte Guise took it up and let it fall again. Let it fall in a kind of sick horror, and staggered to a chair and sat down half fainting. For it was her husband's ring.

The ring that Anthony had worn always on his left-hand little finger ; the ring that he had on when he quitted Gap. It was the same ring that John Bent and his wife had often noticed and admired ; the ring that was undoubtedly on his hand when he followed Mr. Castlemaine that ill-fated night into the Friar's Keep. His poor wife recognized it instantly : she knew it by its peculiar setting.

To her mind it was proof indisputable that he had indeed been put out of the way for ever. Mr. Castlemaine must have possessed himself of the ring, unwilling that so valuable a jewel should be lost : perhaps had drawn it from his finger after death. She shuddered at the thought. But, in the midst of her distress, reason told her that this was only a negative proof, after all ; not sufficient for her to act upon.

When somewhat recovered, she kissed the ring, and put it back into the small compartment with the letter. Pushing in the slide, she shut the drawer, and closed and locked the bureau ; thus leaving all things as she had found them. Not very much result had been gained, it is true, but enough to spur her onwards on her future search. With her mind in a chaos of tumult,—with her brain in a whirl of pain,—with every vein throbbing and fevered, she left the candle on the ground where she had lodged it, and went to the window, gasping for air.

The night was bright with stars ; opposite to her, and seemingly at no distance at all, rose that dark building, the Friar's Keep. As she stood with her eyes strained upon it, though in reality not seeing it but deep in inward thought, there suddenly shone a faint light at one of the casements. Her attention was awakened now ; her heart began to throb.

The faint light grew brighter : and she distinctly saw a form in a monk's habit, the cowl drawn over his head, slowly pass the window ; the light seeming to come from a lamp in his out-stretched hand. All the superstitious tales she had heard of the place rushed into her mind : this must be the apparition of the Grey Friar. Charlotte Guise had an awful dread of revenants, and she turned sick and faint.

With a cry, only half suppressed, bursting from her parted lips, she caught up the candle, afraid to stay, and flew through the door into the narrow passage. The outer door was opening to her hand, when the voice of Harry Castlemaine was heard in the corridor, almost close to the door.

Ah, far more sick and faint did she turn now ! Discovery seemed

inevitable. Instinct led her to blow out the light and to push the door as close as she could push it. She dared not shut it: he might have heard the click of the latch. Had the others come home? Was Mr. Castlemaine ascending to his study to catch her there? Trembling, shaking, panting, the unhappy lady stood in this acme of terror, the ghost of the Friar's Keep behind her; the dread of detection before her. And the candle was making a dreadful smell.

That alone might betray her: Harry Castlemaine might push back the door to ascertain where the smell came from. Could the floor have opened and disclosed a yawning pit, the unhappy lady would thankfully have disappeared within it.

The minute seemed like an hour. Harry did not come on. He appeared to have halted close by, to listen to something. Miles was speaking below.

"Thought I had gone with them to the dinner, and so put out the lights!" retorted Harry, in his free, clear, good natured tones. "You saw the carriage drive away, I suppose, without me. Well, light up again, and bring in some supper."

He came on now, and went into his chamber at the end of the corridor. Staying there a minute or two, as though changing his coat, he passed back, and went down stairs again. Charlotte Guise, shaking in every limb, stole out as the echo of his footsteps died away, closed the door, and took refuge in her own chamber. There she went into hysterics that she was totally unable to suppress, and muffled her head in a blanket to deaden the cry.

The next morning there was commotion in the house: Miss Flora Castlemaine had found herself locked in her bedroom. Given to take impromptu excursions in a morning en robe de nuit, after books, or the kitten, or into somebody's bed-room who was sure not to want her, the young lady for once found herself caged. Mrs. Castlemaine made an angry stir about it: locked doors were so dangerous in case of fire, she said. She accused the maid, Eliza, who attended on Miss Flora, and threatened her with dismissal.

"I can be upon my bible oath that I never locked the door," cried the girl. "Why should I wish to lock it last night, more than any other night? I never touched the key. For the matter of that, I could not tell whether the key was outside or inside. You may send me away this hour, ma'am, but I am innocent, and I can't say more than that."

Poor Madame Guise, who was complaining of migraine this morning, and whose eyes were red and heavy, took the blame upon herself, to exculpate the wrongfully accused servant. In her terror of the previous night, she had totally forgotten to unlock Flora's door. She hastened now to say that she had looked in on the sleeping child when she herself went up to bed: in coming out, it was possible she had turned the

key. Many of the chamber doors in France shut and opened with the key only : she might have turned this key unthinkingly, meaning but to shut the door.

So the matter ended. But Charlotte Guise could not help feeling how painfully one deceit, one wrong act, leads to another. And Mr. Harry, she found, had never been to the dinner at all. Some matter of business, or perhaps some whim, had led him to break his engagement, and give due notice of it the day beforehand to the entertainers. As Miles had observed, one never could be certain of Harry Castlemaine.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GREY MONK.

THAT the Grey Monk was haunting the Friar's Keep that night, and for a longer period than could be quite agreeable to any chance passer-by, appeared to be indisputable.

Some of the Grey Sisters were up that evening at the coastguard station. The wife of one of the men was very ill, her infant being only three days old: and Sister Rachel had been with her for the day. At eight o'clock sister Rachel was relieved by Sister Mona, who would remain for the night. Sister Ann walked up from the Nunnery with Sister Mona for company, and would walk back again with Sister Rachel.

It was about half past eight that they left the station to return home, the Sisters Ann and Rachel. The night was starlight, the air somewhat frosty. Talking of the poor woman just quitted, Sister Rachel saying the fever was getting higher, they approached the Friar's Keep. They were on the opposite side of the road, and had nearly reached Chapel Lane when something strange—some kind of glimmer or faint flash—struck on Sister Rachel's vision, and caused her to turn her eyes on the upper casements of the Keep. With a spring and a cry, she seized hold of Sister Ann, and clung to her.

"Have you trod upon a stone?" asked practical Sister Ann. But the very fact of turning to her companion, who was outside, brought the windows of the Keep before her, and she saw the Grey Monk slowly gliding along, with his cowl covering his head and his lamp in his hand. A shadowy kind of form, suggestive of terrible ideas that don't pertain to earth.

The blood of the two unfortunate sisters seemed to turn, and they nearly sank away in evaporation. They clung to each other, arm in arm, hand to hand, pushing, staggering, pressing onwards, and in a minute, as it seemed, gained the Grey Nunnery. The door was opened by Sister Caroline, and they burst into the reception parlour.

The Superior sat there, Mary Ursula ; and most of the sisters with

her who were not out on charitable missions. To have stopped the tongues of the two terrified grey women would have been about as feasible as to stem a rushing torrent in its overwhelming course. They had seen the apparition of the Grey Monk gliding past the window with their own eyes; had seen his lamp; had nearly fainted at him altogether.

"Tut, tut, tut!" reproved Sister Mildred, who was better this evening and downstairs. "I think you must have been deceived by your fears. I never saw it in my life."

But they only told their tale the more persistently, and Sister Mildred wavered. In vain Sister Mary Ursula represented to them that there were no such things as ghosts: that people, in thinking they saw them, were misled by their fears and fancies. To this the two scared women only reiterated that they *saw* it. They were walking quietly along, talking of the poor sick wife of the coastguardsman; nothing could have been further from their thoughts than any fears or fancies, when the figure suddenly appeared, plainly and unmistakably, before their astonished eyes.

"Sister Rachel saw it first," urged Sister Ann, anxious to defend herself against the imputation of having taken alarm unnecessarily, as though she were a foolish, timid child. "When she called out and caught hold of my arm, I thought she had trod upon a stone, or twisted her foot, or something; and, in turning to her, there I saw the light in the window, and the figure of the Grey Monk. We stood rooted to the spot, holding on to one another, just too frightened to move, our poor eyes staring at the Keep. He glided past that window and then past the other, his lighted lamp stretched out in his hand; just as Sister Judith once saw him glide a year or so ago—and she knows it.

Sister Judith, a simple woman, great in pudding-making, who had stood listening with round, frightened eyes, murmured her confirmation. One night when she was belated, having been to a farm-house where sickness reigned, she had seen it exactly as the two sisters were describing to have seen it now; and had come home and fainted.

"I was beginning to forget my fright," said she, looking pleadingly at the two superiors. "But since the late talk there has been about that poor Mr. Anthony Castlemaine, I've not dared to go out of doors at night alone. For the ghost has been seen more frequently since he disappeared: in fact, as the ladies know, it's said by some that it is the young man's spirit that comes now, not the Grey Friar's."

"It was the Grey Friar we saw to-night, let people say what they will," rejoined Sister Ann.

The talking continued. This was a great event in the monotonous existence of the Grey Ladies: and the two unfortunate Sisters were shaking still. Mary Ursula withdrew quietly from the room, and went up to her chamber with a cloud on her brow. There she put on the

grey cloak and bonnet of the order ; came down again, and let herself out at the front door.

There was something in all this gossip that disturbed and distressed Mary Ursula. Anthony's fate, and the uncertainty connected with it, was more often in her mind than she would have cared to tell. Like Charlotte Guise, she—what with dwelling on it and listening to the superstitious surmises in Greylands—had grown to think that the Friar's Keep did contain some mystery as yet unsolved. As to "ghosts," Mary Castlemaine's sound good sense utterly repudiated all belief in such. What then, she naturally asked herself, was this figure, that took the appearance of the traditional Grey Monk, and showed itself at the windows of the Keep, lamp in hand? Had it anything to do with the disappearance of Anthony?

Obedying an irresistible impulse, she was going forth to-night to look at this said apparition herself—if, indeed, it would appear again—and so allow itself to be looked at. It was perhaps a foolish thing to do ; but she wanted to see with her own unprejudiced eyes what and who it was like. With her whole heart she wished the occurrences of that past February night and the mysteries of the Friar's Keep—if, in truth, it contained any—were thrown open to the light of day : it might tend to clear what was dark—to clear her uncle from the silent suspicions attaching to him. It was of course his place to institute this search, but he did not do it. Encasing himself in his pride, his haughty indifference, she supposed he was content to let the matter alone until it righted itself. But she loved her uncle and was painfully jealous for his good name.

Turning swiftly out of the gate of the Nunnery, she went up the hill, passed the Chapel Ruins, crossed the road, and stood still to gaze at the Friar's Keep. The church clock was striking nine. Taking up her position under the hedge, in almost the self-same spot where John Bent and Anthony Castlemaine had taken theirs that unlucky night, she fixed her eyes on the windows, and waited. The old building, partly in ruins, looked grey and grim enough. Sometimes the moon lighted it up ; but there was no moon to-night. The stars were bright, the atmosphere was clear.

The minutes, as they went by, seemed like hours. Mary Ursula had not much more patience than other people, and it was exhausting itself rapidly. Not a shadow or sign was there of the Grey Monk or of any other appearance. To judge by its silence and its lonely look, one might have said the Keep had not been entered since the Grey Monk was alive.

"It is hardly to be supposed it would show itself twice in one night," breathed Mary in a spirit that was somewhat of a mocking one. But in that she was mistaken : and she went away too soon.

At the end of a quarter of an hour—which had seemed to her like

two quarters—she gave it up. Crossing the road to the Chapel gate, she went in, traversed the ruins, and stood looking out to sea. Mary had another vexation on her mind that night : earlier in the day a report had reached her in a letter that her recreant lover, William Blake-Gordon, was engaged again. So soon!—so soon! Whether it was true, she knew not : it could not, either way, make much difference to the pain that filled her heart : but the report wrung it cruelly. The other name, mentioned in connection with his, was Agatha Mountsorrel's ; her own close friend of former days. She knew that she ought not to feel this bitter pain, this wild jealousy ; that, once he had been lost to her, she should have put him out of her mind for good. Ah, it is all very well for the wise to lay down laws, to say this is wrong and the other is right, and you must act accordingly ; human nature is but frail, and the heart must be true to itself.

Some slight movement caught her attention below. It was low water, and the strip of beach underneath was free. Mary leaned over to look. But she could not see : the shelving-out rocks hid the path as she stood. In the deep silence of the night, she thought she could distinguish whispering voices : and she waited until their owners should have passed a little further on, where a bend inward of the rocks allowed a view to be obtained.

It was the greatest vexation of all ! A tall fine form came into sight ; too tall, too fine, to be any but Harry Castlemaine's. His arm was around the waist of some young girl ; his head was turned to her, and they were conversing eagerly. She wore a dark cloak, its hood drawn up over her head : Mary could not see her face, for their backs were towards her, but she fancied it was Jane Hallet. They passed away beyond the nunnery, as if returning to the village, and were lost to sight and hearing.

The heaving sea stretched itself out before her eyes ; the dead of the past ages were mouldering away beneath her feet ; the canopy of sky, studded with stars in its vast expanse, lay above her head. But for all these signs, and the thoughts they involved, Mary Ursula Castlemaine might in that moment have lost heart and courage. The by-ways of life seemed very crooked just then ; its troubles pregnant with perplexity and pain. But God was over all. The turbulent waves were held in check by His hand ; the long-ago dead had been called by Him ; the sky and the stars were but emblems of His power. Yes, He was over all. From His throne in Heaven He looked down on the world ; on its cares, its trials, its weaknesses, its temptations and sins ; over-ruling all according to His will. He could set things straight ; He was full of compassion, long-suffering, and mercy. The dark troubles here would be merged in a bright hereafter : a place where there should be no cankering heart-break, where sorrow and suffering should flee away. A few more years, and—

"Dear me, ma'am ! I beg your pardon."

Mary Ursula, buried in her far-off thoughts in the solitary place, was startled at the address, and turned round with a slight cry. Close at her elbow stood John Bent ; a small basket in his hand, covered with a white cloth.

"I'm sure I frightened you, ma'am !"

"Just for the moment you did," she said with her sweet smile, interrupting his further apologies. "I was standing to take a look at the sea. How grand it is from this spot !"

John Bent agreed that it was grand, and proceeded to explain his presence. His wife had despatched him with some broth and other trifles that might be acceptable to the sick woman up at the coastguard-station. In passing the chapel ruins on his way thither, he had caught sight of some one standing at the edge of the cliff, and turned in at once to see who it was.

"No wonder you did not hear me, ma'am, for I crept up on tiptoe," he acknowledged. "Since the disappearance of Mr. Anthony Castlemaine, this place is just as though it haunted me, for it is never out of my mind. To see somebody standing here in the shade of the corner wall gave me a turn. I could not imagine who it was, and meant to pounce upon 'em."

"The place lies on my mind also," said Mary Ursula. "I wish the doings of that night could be brought to light."

The landlord shook his head. She could not wish it as he wished it.

"I don't think now it ever will be," he said. "At least, I often fear it won't. There is only one person, as I believe, who could throw light upon it ; and it does not seem to be his pleasure to speak."

She knew that he alluded to her uncle : and she seized on the moment for speaking a few words that she had long wished to speak to John Bent. In spite of the opinion he held, and that she knew he held, in regard to that past night, she respected the man greatly.

"I cannot be ignorant, Mr. Bent, of the stigma you would cast on Mr. Castlemaine : the suspicion, I would rather say, lying in your mind against him. I believe that nothing can be more unjust : nothing more inconsistent with the true facts, could they be disclosed."

John Bent was silent. She stood close in the corner, within the shade cast by the slanting bit of stone wall, the blank side wall of the Grey Nunnery towering close above her. John was so near as almost to touch her. The sea was before them, a light twinkling on it here and there from some fishing vessel ; the grass-grown square, once the site of the chapel, with its dottings of low crumbling walls, lay to their left, and beyond it was the Friar's Keep, its gothic door pushed to as usual. A lonely spot altogether it was to stand in, in the silence of the spring night. -

"Why should you cherish this suspicion?" she asked.

John Bent tilted his hat slightly up on one side, and slowly rubbed his head. He was a very honest-minded, straightforward man; and though he might on occasion find it inexpedient to avow the truth, he yet would not, even by implication, speak an untruth; or tacitly let one be inferred.

"It is a subject, ma'am, on which my mouth ought to be closed to you."

"Not at all," she answered. "Were I Mr. Castlemaine's wife or daughter you might urge that. I am his niece, it is true; but I have now in a manner withdrawn myself from the world, and——But I will leave that argument, and go to another. For my own sake, I wish you to speak openly with me. These troubles lie on my mind; sometimes I cannot sleep for thinking of them."

"I'm sure I can't sleep for them," said John.

"And I think that steps should be taken to put the doubts to flight—if we only knew what steps they could be."

John stooped to lodge the basket on the low top of the grass-grown cliff, jutting upwards before him. But he did not answer.

"Believe me when I say that no thought of reproach on you for entertaining these opinions rests on my mind," proceeded Miss Castlemaine. "I am sure that you conscientiously hold them; that you cannot divest yourself of them; and——"

"I wish I didn't," interposed John. "I only wish I had no cause to."

"There is no cause," she said in a low tone; "no true one. I am as sure of it as that I stand here. Even had it been Mr. Castlemaine whom you saw come in here that night, I feel sure his presence could have been explained away. But I think you must have been mistaken. You have no confirmation that it was he: nay, the confirmation lies rather the other way—that he was not here. Considering all this, I think you ought not to persist in your opinion, Mr. Bent; or to let the world believe you persist in it."

"As I have said before, ma'am, this is a matter that I don't care to talk to you upon."

"But I wish you to talk to me. I ask you to talk to me. You may see that I speak to you confidentially—do you so speak to me? There is no one else I would thus speak to about it, save you."

"Ma'am, it's just this—not but what I feel the honour you do me, and thank you for it; and goodness knows what respect I hold and have always held you in, Miss Castlemaine!—But it's this, ma'am: your opinion lies one way and mine the other: and while I would not insist to *you* that Mr. Castlemaine was guilty, I yet can't let myself say he was not."

"I am as fully persuaded he was not as that those stars are above us," she said. But John made no reply.

"Mr. Anthony was made away with, ma'am. I——"

"No, no," she interrupted with a shiver.

"I don't accuse Mr. Castlemaine of having done it," proceeded John. "What I say, and hold to, is this, ma'am: that Mr. Castlemaine must know something of what became of him. But he does not say it; he keeps silence: and it is that silence that strengthens the suspicions against him. I saw him come in here that night just as surely as I see you here now, Miss Castlemaine. It's true I did not see him go on into the Friar's Keep: these mouldering walls, sticking up here and there a foot or two from the earth, dodge one's eyesight, and in less than a minute my attention was called off Mr. Castlemaine by Mr. Anthony's own movements. I saw *him* go into the Keep: he made for it straight."

"But I say that it may not have been Mr. Castlemaine," she urged again, having quietly heard him to the end.

"What other man is there in Greylands, ma'am, of the height and size of Mr. Castlemaine—one with the bold, free, upright walk and the gentleman's dress?" returned the landlord. "Only Mr. Harry: and Mr. Harry is too young and slender to be mistaken for his father, even in the moonlight. Mr. Harry happened to be away that night at Newerton."

"I think you are cruelly, persistently obstinate. Forgive me, Mr. Bent; I do not wish or intend to hurt your feelings," she added in a gentle, even kind tone. "It seems to me that you must have some animus against Mr. Castlemaine."

"The poor young gentleman was living under my roof, ma'am. I went forth with him that night, halted with him opposite this very gate, and watched him in. It has sat on my mind always since that I am in a manner accountable for him—that it lies with me to find out what became of him."

"I can understand the feeling and appreciate it," she answered quickly. "In itself it is a good and right feeling; but I think that its very intensity tends to mislead you, and to cause this animosity against Mr. Castlemaine. The person you saw come in here may have been a stranger: you have had no confirmation of any kind that it was Mr. Castlemaine: and the eyesight at night is so deceptive."

"Yes, I have," said John, dropping his voice to a whisper, and speaking with evident reluctance. "I have had confirmation. Ma'am, you make me speak against my better will."

"You allude to Anthony," she rejoined somewhat impatiently. "You have said, I know, that he likewise thought it was his uncle—as indeed seems proved by the fact of his following him in. But, it may be that he was only led to think so by some exclamation of yours: that he did not see with his own eyes. He is not here to prove it, one way or the other. In thus pressing my view of the case, I am only anxious that

the fair truth should be established," she resumed after an instant's pause, as though she would explain her own persistency. "I am not wishing to mislead or bias you."

"We both saw him, ma'am, we both saw plainly that it was Mr. Castlemaine; but I did not allude to Mr. Anthony," spoke John, in the same subdued tone. "It has been confirmed by another."

"By whom?" she asked, drawing her cloak together with a sharp movement as though she were cold. "Do not hesitate; tell me all. I have said that I regard this as a confidential interview."

And perhaps John Bent, after what had passed, could find no plea of refusal. He was a very persuadable man when either his good sense or his good feeling was appealed to. As Mrs. Bent was wont to tell him, he had a soft place in his heart.

"Up to last night that ever was, ma'am, I had no idea that Mr. Castlemaine had been seen by any but us. But I find he was. I'll tell you what I've heard. You will perhaps think the evidence not worth much, Miss Castlemaine, for the man who saw him was three parts tipsy at the time: but he must have had his wits about him, for all that."

To make plain to the reader what the landlord was about to relate, we must go back to the previous evening. On that evening at twilight, John Bent sauntered over to the beach, and sat down on the bench to smoke his pipe. It was a fine, still evening, favourable for the fishing-boats. While he was smoking peaceably, and gazing at the stars, beginning to show themselves in the sky, Jack Tuff, the sailor, strolled up, gave the landlord the good evening, and took his seat on the same bench. He produced his pipe, evidently wanting to smoke; but he, just as evidently, had no tobacco. John handed him some, and allowed him to light the pipe by his own. Talking of this and that, they somehow got upon the subject of Anthony Castlemaine's disappearance: and Mr. Tuff, perhaps out of gratitude for the good tobacco, avowed to his astonished companion that he could have confirmed his evidence had he chosen, as to it having been Mr. Castlemaine who had crossed the road to the chapel ruins that fatal February night.

According to Mr. Jack Tuff's account, his own movements that night had been as follows. He had walked over to the little fishing hamlet, Beeton, and taken a glass with a comrade there. It might have been two glasses. At any rate, it was enough to make Jack wish to pay another social visit as he went back to Greylands, instead of going straight home. In one of three cottages situate at the back of Greylands' Rest, there lodged a sailor friend of Jack's: and accordingly
ned up Chapel Lane—the nearest way from where he then was
—to make the call. There he stayed until late, taking other glasses,
very late indeed for the quiet village, and turned out considerably after

eleven with unsteady legs. He staggered down Chapel Lane pretty safely until he neared the other end of it. When opposite the turning to the Hutt, who should emerge from that turning but some tall man. At the moment, Jack Tuff happened to be holding on to a tree trunk, with one arm, to steady himself: but he made it out to be Mr. Castlemaine, and pulled his old round hat off in token of respect. He did not know whether Mr. Castlemaine saw him; but fancied he did not see him. Mr. Castlemaine went up the lane towards his home, and Jack Tuff went on down it.

So far, that might be regarded as a corroboration of the Master of Greylands' statement at the time—namely, that he had left the Hutt about half-past eleven after smoking a pipe with the commodore: and the probability was that Mr. Castlemaine had not seen Jack Tuff, or he might have called on him to confirm his testimony as to the hour.

Jack Tuff continued his progress down the small remaining portion of the lane, trying all the while to put on his hat. Something was undoubtedly the matter with either the head or the hat; for the hat would not go on the head, or the head into the hat. A tree, or something, caught Jack's elbow, and the hat dropped; Jack, in stooping for it, dropped also; and there he was, sitting amid the trunks of trees on the side of the lane, his back propped against one of them and his hat nowhere.

How long Jack remained there, he did not pretend to say. His impression was that he dropped asleep; but whether that was so, or not, Jack could not have told had he been bribed with a golden sovereign. At any rate, the next thing he heard or remembered, was, that some steps were coming down the lane. Jack looked up, and saw they were those of the Master of Greylands.

"Are you sure it was him?" interrupted John Bent, at this point of the narration, edging a little bit nearer to Jack on the bench.

"In course, I'm sure," replied Jack Tuff. "The moonlight shone full upon him through the leafless branches o' the trees, and I saw him plain. He didn't see me that time, for sure. I was in the dark, back amid the clump o' trees; and he went along with his head and eyes straight afore him to the end o' the lane."

"And where did he go then?"

"Don't know. He didn't come back again. Suppose he was crossing over to the Keep."

"Well, go on," said John.

There was not much more to tell. After this incident, the passing of the Master of Greylands, Mr. Tuff bethought himself that he might as well be getting homewards. To make a start, however, was not easy of accomplishment. First he had to find his hat, which took up some considerable time: it was only when he had given it up for lost that he became conscious it was doubled up under him as he sat.

Next he had to pull out his match-box and light his pipe: and that took time. Lastly he had to get upon his legs, a work requiring skill, but accomplished by the friendly aid of the trees. Altogether from a quarter to half an hour must have been used in the process. Once fairly started and clear of the lane, he came upon Mr. Bent, pacing about opposite the ruins and waiting for Mr. Anthony Castlemaine.

"Did you hear the pistol shot?" asked John Bent when the recital was over.

"Never heard it at all," said Jack Tuff. "I must have been feeling for my hat."

"And why did you not say at the time that you saw the Master of Greylands—and so have borne out my story?" demanded John Bent as a final question.

"I dare say!" retorted Jack Tuff. "And be laughed at for an imbecile who was drunk and saw double! Nobody 'ud believe me. I'm not a going to say it now, Mr. Bent, except to you. I'm not a going to draw down Mr. Castlemaine upon me, and perhaps get put away in gaol."

And this was all that John Bent got from him. That the man spoke the strict truth according to his belief—namely, that it was Mr. Castlemaine he saw both times that night—John could have staked his life upon. But that the man was equally determined not to say so much to the world, fearing the displeasure of Mr. Castlemaine: nay, that he probably would deny it in toto if the world questioned him, the landlord equally saw.

Miss Castlemaine heard the narrative in silence. It did not shake her belief in the innocence of her uncle; but it made it more difficult to confute John Bent, and she was now sorry to have spoken to him at all. With a deep sigh she turned to depart.

"We can only wait the elucidation that time will bring," she said. "Rely upon it, Mr. Bent, that if any ill deed was done that night, Mr. Castlemaine had no hand in it."

John Bent maintained a respectful silence. They crossed the ruins and he held open the gate for her to pass through. Just then she remembered another topic, and spoke of it.

"What is it that appears at the casements here, in the guise of a Grey Friar? Two of the Sisters have been alarmed by it to-night."

"Something like a dozen people have been scared by it lately," said John. "As to what it is, ma'am, I don't know. Senseless idiots to be frightened! as if a ghost could harm us! I should like to see it appear to *me*!"

With this answer, betraying his inward bravery, and a mutual good-night, they parted. John going up the hill with his basket; Miss Castlemaine turning towards the nunnery, and pondering deeply.

Strange, perhaps, to say, considering the state Jack Tuff was

avowedly in, that eventful night, a conviction that his sight had not deceived him, had taken hold of her. That some mystery did attach to that night, independent of the disappearance of Anthony, she had always fancied : and this evidence only served to confirm it. Why should Mr. Castlemaine have been going into the chapel ruins at that midnight hour ? and, if it was he who went in, why did he deny it ? Put it, that it was really Mr. Castlemaine, why then the inference was that he must know what became of Anthony. It seemed very strange altogether ; a curious, unaccountable, mysterious affair. She felt it to be so. Not that she lost an iota of faith in her uncle : she seemed to trust him as she would have trusted her father : but her mind was troubled, her brain was in a chaos of confusion.

In some such confusion as she stepped bodily into a minute later, At the gate of the Nunnery she found herself in the midst of a small crowd, a small excited number of people who were running up and jostled her. Women were crying and panting, girls were pushing : a man with some object covered up in his arms, was in the midst. When the garb of Miss Castlemaine was recognized in the gloom, that of the Grey Sisters, all fell respectfully back.

"What is amiss, good people ?" asked Sister Mary Ursula. And a faint moan of sympathy escaped her as she heard the answer. Polly Gleeson, one of Tim Gleeson's numerous little ones, had set her night-gown on fire and was terribly burnt. Tim was somewhere abroad, as usual ; but another man had offered to bring her to the Grey Ladies—the usual refuge for accidents and sickness.

Admitted to the Nunnery, the little sufferer was carried up to one of the small beds always kept in readiness. Sister Mildred herself, who was great in burns, came to her at once, directing two of the other Sisters what was to be done. The sobbing mother, Nancy Gleeson, who had a hard life of it on the whole, asked whether she might not stay and watch by Polly for the night : but the Ladies recommended her to go home to her other children and to leave Polly to them in all confidence. Sister Mildred pronounced the burns, though bad to look at, and very painful, not to be attended with danger : should the latter arise, she promised Nancy Gleeson to send for her at once. So Nancy went away pacified, the crowd attending her ; and the good Ladies were left to their charge and to the night-watch it entailed.

But Sister Mary Ursula had recognized, among the women and girls pressing round the gate, the face of Jane Hallet. She recognized the dress also, as the one she had seen before that night.

Meanwhile John Bent reached the coastguard Station. After chatting with the sick woman's husband, Henry Mann, who happened to be off duty and at home, John departed again with his empty basket. He chanced to be on the side path opposite the Friar's Keep—just as the two Sisters, Ann and Rachel, had taken it rather more than an hour

earlier. John Bent, quite unconscious of what had happened to them, walked along leisurely, his mind full of the interview just held with Miss Castlemaine. In passing the Keep he cast his eyes up to it. Few people passed it at night without casting up their eyes—for the fascination that superstition has for most of us is irresistible. Even as John looked, a faint light dawned on the casement from within : and there came into view the figure, bearing its lamp. It was probably just at that self-same moment that the eyes of Madame Guise, gazing stealthily from the window of Mr. Castlemaine's study, were regaled with the same sight. John Bent did not like it any more than Madame did ; any more than the Sisters did. He took to his heels and arrived at the Dolphin in a state of cold chill indescribable.

CHAPTER XVIII.

JANE HALLET.

GREYLANDS lay, calm and monotonous, basking under the morning sun. There were no signs of any of the commotion that had stirred it the previous night : no crowding people surrounding a sad little burthen ; no women's cries ; and John Bent's propriety had come back to him. Greylands had heard the news from one end to the other—the Grey Monk had been abroad again. It had appeared to two of the Sisters and to the landlord of the Dolphin.

The burnt child, an intelligent girl of five years old, lay in the little bed, Sister Phœby sitting with her. The window of the room faced the road ; it had upright iron bars before it : originally placed there, perhaps, to prevent the nuns putting their heads out to take a sly peep at the world. Polly Gleeson was in less pain, and lay quietly. Mr. Parker had looked in, and confirmed Sister Mildred's opinion that she would do well.

The door gently opened, and there entered Sister Mary Ursula and Miss Reene. Ethel, hearing of the accident, had come down from Greylands' Rest. Sister Phœby rose, smiling and nodding, and they approached the bed.

"She is ever so much better," said the watching sister. "See, she does not cry at all."

Polly was a pretty little girl. Her brown hair lay around her on the bolster ; her dark eyes smiled at the ladies. The face was not touched, and nothing could be seen of the injuries as she lay : the worst of them were about the chest. Tears stood in Ethel's eyes.

"Poor little Polly !" she said, stooping gently to kiss her. "How did it happen, little one?"

"Billy took the candle to look for a marble on the floor, and I looked too ; and then there come a great light and mother screeched out."

"But were you not in bed before that, Polly? It was past nine o'clock."

"Mother was undressing of us then : she'd been a busy washing."

"Poor little darling ! Well, Polly, you will be well soon ; and you must take great care of candles after this."

Polly gave as emphatic a nod as the bolster allowed her ; as much as to say she would never go within wide range of a candle again. Miss Castlemaine took Sister Phœby's place, and the latter went away.

That the child was now at ease appeared evident ; for presently her eyelids, heavy with sleep, gradually closed. She had had no sleep all night. Mary Ursula took some work from her pocket. The Sisters were making some garments for this child : all she had—and a poor "all" it was—had been caught up from the floor by the terrified mother, and rolled round her to put the fire out.

"How peaceful it seems here," said Ethel in a low tone. "I think I should like to come and be a Sister with you, Mary."

Miss Castlemaine smiled, one of her sad smiles. "That would never do, Ethel."

"It is so useful a life."

"You will find usefulness in another sphere. It would not be *right* that you should bury yourself here."

"We all told you that, Mary, you know, at Greylands' Rest. But you have done it."

"My dear, the cases are essentially different. My hopes of happiness, my prospects in the world were over : yours, Ethel, are not even yet in the bud. When some good man shall woo and win you, you will find where your proper sphere of usefulness lies."

"I don't want to be won," spoke Ethel : just as young girls are given to say. "I'm sure I would ten times rather be a Grey Sister than marry Harry Castlemaine."

Mary looked up with somewhat unusual quickness. The words brought to her mind one of the incidents of the past night.

"Harry does not continue to tease you, does he, Ethel?"

"Yes, he does. I thought he had left it off : but this morning he brought the subject up again—and he let everybody hear him !"

"What did he say ?"

"Not very much. It was when he was going out of the room after breakfast. He turned his head to me and said he hoped I should soon be ready with my answer to the question he had put to me more than once. Papa and mamma must have understood what he meant. I could have thrown the loaf after him."

"I think he must be only doing it in joke, Ethel," was the slow, thoughtful rejoinder.

"I don't know whether he is or not. Sometimes I think he is ; at

others I think he is in earnest : whichever it may be, I dislike it very much. Not for the whole world would I marry Harry Castlemaine."

"Ethel, I fancy—I am not sure, but I fancy—you have no real cause to fear he will press it, or to let it trouble you. Harry is hardly staid enough yet to settle down. He does many random things."

"We have had quite a commotion at home this morning," resumed Ethel, passing to another topic. "Somebody locked Flora in her bedroom last night—when she wanted to run out this morning as usual, the door was fast. Mamma has been so angry : and when the news of Polly Gleeson's accident came up just now, she began again, saying Flora might just as well have been burnt also as not, burnt to death."

"Who locked her in?"

"I don't know—unless it was Madame Guise. Papa and mamma and I were at dinner at Stilborough—at the Barclays', Mary. Harry would not go. It was a nice party. We had singing in the evening."

"But about the door?"

"Well, Madame Guise thought she might have unintentionally done it. She said she went in last night to look at Flora. I can scarcely think she did, for she has gone in many a time and never turned the key before. Or the keys of other doors, either."

"At least, it does not seem to have been of any consequence."

"No ; only mamma made it so. I tell you every little trifle that I can, Mary," she added, laughing quietly. "Shut up here, it seems to me that you must like to hear news from the outer world."

"And so I do," was the answer. "I have not lost all interest in my fellow pilgrims, I assure you, Ethel."

"I wore my black net, trimmed with white satin ribbons : you can't think how nice it looked, Mary," said Miss Ethel, some of her vanity creeping to the fore. "And a silver flower in my hair."

"I have no doubt the dress and the flower did look well, considering what a pretty girl it was adorning," was Mary's reply. And Ethel blushed slightly. She knew how nice-looking she was.

"Does Madame Guise continue to suit?"

"Oh, quite well. Mrs. Castlemaine thinks there's nobody equal to her. I like her also ; but at times she puzzles me."

"How does she puzzle you?"

"Well, I can hardly explain it. She seems strange at times. But I must be going," added Ethel, rising.

"You are in a hurry, Ethel."

"I have to go up the cliff to Miss Hallet's. Jane is hem-stitching some handkerchiefs for mamma. Mamma had one of them with her last night : Mrs. Barclay saw the work, and said she would like some done for herself. So I am to tell Jane to call at Mrs. Barclay's the next time she goes to Stilborough. The work is really beautiful : it is the broad hem-stitch, you know, Mary ; four or five rows of it."

A few more words spoken in the same low tone, lest the sleeping child should be disturbed, and Ethel took her departure. Opposite the beach she encountered Mrs. Bent: who was crossing back home in her cherry-ribboned cap from a purchase at Pike's tea-shop.

"A nice day again, Miss Ethel!"

"It is a lovely day," said Ethel, stopping; for she and Mrs. Bent were great friends. "I have been in to see poor Polly Gleeson. How badly she is burnt!"

"The only wonder is that it never happened before, with that imbecile of a mother," was Mrs. Bent's tart rejoinder. "Of all incapable women, Nancy Gleeson's about the worst. Fancy her letting the children play in their nightgowns with a candle! Where could her senses have been?"

"Well, it is a sad thing for Polly. But the Sisters say she will do well. Oh, by the way, Mrs. Bent," continued Ethel, turning as she was going onwards, "will you let mamma have your receipt for stewed eels again? The new cook does not do them to her mind: and mamma does not know where the fault lies."

"It's the best receipt for eels in the three kingdoms," spoke Mrs. Bent with pride. "It was my mother's before me. Will you step across for it now, Miss Ethel?"

"Not now: as I come back. I am going up the cliff."

"To that Nancy Gleeson's I suppose," cried Mrs. Bent in her free manner. "She does not deserve it. If I had twenty children about me, I'll be bound not one of 'em should ever set itself alight in my presence."

"Not there," said Ethel, slightly laughing. "I am taking a message from mamma to Jane Hallet."

"I hope it is to warn her not to make herself so free with Mr. Harry," cried Mrs. Bent, speaking on the moment's impulse. Had she taken time for thought she would not have said it.

"Warn her not to make herself so free with Mr. Harry!" repeated Ethel somewhat haughtily. "Why, Mrs. Bent, what can you mean?"

"Well, I have seen them walking together after nightfall," said Mrs. Bent, unable to eat her words.

"They may have met accidentally," returned Ethel after a pause.

"Oh, of course, they *may*," assented Mrs. Bent in a significant tone.

"Since when have you seen them?" pursued Ethel, feeling surprised and rather scandalized.

"Ah well, I can't tell that. Since last autumn, though. No harm may be meant, Miss Ethel; I don't say it is; and none may come of it: but young girls in Jane Hallet's position ought to take better care of themselves than to give rise to talk."

Ethel continued her way to the cliff in some annoyance. While Mr. Harry Castlemaine made a pretence of addressing herself, it was not agreeable to hear that he was flirting with the village girls. It's true Ethel did not intend to listen to him : she absolutely rejected him ; but that made little difference. Neither in itself was this walking with Jane Hallet the right thing. Jane was far superior to the general run of the girls at Greylands. She had been well educated by the Grey Ladies, morally and else, having gone to school to them daily for years ; she was modest and reticent in manner ; and Ethel would as soon believe a breath of scandal could tarnish herself as Jane. Her brother, George Hallet, who was drowned, had been made a sort of companion of by Harry Castlemaine during the last year or two of his life, as Greylands well remembered : and Ethel came to the conclusion that the intimacy Mrs. Bent talked of must be a sort of remanet of that friendship, meaning nothing.

Now it happened that Jane Hallet, within the pretty cottage near the top of the cliff, was being taken to task by her aunt for the same fault that Mrs. Bent had spoken of—the staying abroad after nightfall. Miss Hallet had latterly found much occasion to speak on this score ; but Jane was invariably ready with some plausible excuse ; so that Miss Hallet, naturally unsuspecting, and trusting Jane as she would have trusted herself, never made much by the argument.

After taking the handkerchief to Greylands' Rest the previous evening, Jane had gone home, swallowed her tea hastily, put off the best things that her aunt grumbled at her for having put on, and then sat down to work. Some article was wanted in the house ; and at dusk Jane ran down in her dark cloak to get it. From which expedition she did not get back until half-past nine was turned : and she seemed to have come up like one running for a wager. Miss Hallet was then ill with an attack of spasms, and Jane remained unreprieved. This morning, Miss Hallet had leisure to recur to it. Jane sat by the window, busy at one of the handkerchiefs. The sun shone on her bright flaxen hair ; the light print dress she wore was neat and nice—Jane's dresses always were.

"How long does it take to get from here to Pike's shop and back again, Jane?"

"From here to Pike's shop and back again, aunt ?—I could do it in a short ten minutes," said unsuspecting Jane. "It would take you longer of course."

"How did it happen then last night that it took you two hours and ten minutes?" demanded Miss Hallet. "You left here soon after half past seven, and you did not get back till close upon ten."

The soft colour in Jane's face grew bright on a sudden. She held her work to the window, as though some difficulty had occurred in the cambric.

"After buying the sugar, I went into the parlour to say good evening

to Susan Pike, aunt. And then there came that dreadful outcry about Nancy Gleeson's poor burnt child."

The truth, but not the whole truth. Miss Jane had stayed three minutes with Susan Pike; and the commotion about the child had occurred some two hours later. The intervening time she did not allude to, or account for. Miss Hallet, never thinking to enquire minuteiy into time, so far accepted the explanation.

"If Nancy Gleeson's children had every one been burnt, that's no reason why you should stay out all that while."

"Nearly everybody was out, aunt. It was like a fair around the Nunnery gate."

"You go off here; you go off there; pretty nigh every evening you dance out somewhere. I'm sure *I* never did so when I was a girl."

"When it is too dusk to see to work and too soon to light the candle, a run down the cliff does no harm, aunt."

"Yes, but you stay when once you are down. It comes of that propensity of yours for gossip, Jane. Once you get into the company of Susan Pike or that idle Patty Nettleby, you take as much thought of time as you might if all the clocks stopped still for you."

Jane bent to bite off a needleful of cotton—to hide her face.

"There you are! How often have I told you not to bite your thread! Many a set of teeth as good as yours has been ruined by it. *I* had the habit once; but my lady broke me of it. Use your scissors, and—Dear me! here's Miss Reene."

Ethel came in. Jane stood up to receive her and to hear her message. The girl's manner was very retiring. Ethel thought of what she had just heard: certainly Jane looked pretty enough to attract Mr. Harry Castlemaine. But the blue eyes, raised to hers, were honest and good; and Ethel believed Jane was good also.

"Thank you: yes, I shall be glad to do the handkerchiefs for Mrs. Barclay," said Jane. "But I shall not be going into Stilborough for a week or so: I was there yesterday. And of course I should not begin them until I have finished Mrs. Castlemaine's."

"I suppose Mrs. Barclay is in no particular hurry," said Ethel.

"Jane might get through more work if she chose," remarked Miss Hallet. "Not that I wish her to do any: it is her own will entirely. On the other hand, I have no objection to it: and as she is fond of finer clothes than I should purchase for her, she has to get them for herself. Just before you came in, Miss Reene, I was telling her how she wastes her time. Once dusk has set in, down she goes to her acquaintances in the village. To-night she stays at Susan Pike's; to-morrow night at Martha Nettleby's; the next night at old Mother Dance's, under the cliff! With one chattering gossip and another, and burnt children, and what not, Jane never lacks an excuse for idling away her evenings."

"Mrs. Castlemaine said something about having her initials worked on these handkerchiefs: do you know whether she wishes it done, Miss Reene?" interposed Jane, who seemed to be flurried by the lecture. "I did not like to ask about it yesterday afternoon."

"I don't know at all," said Ethel. "You had better see Mrs. Castlemaine."

"Very well, ma'am."

Ethel went down the cliff again, tripping along the zigzag path. Other paths branched off to other cottages. She took one that brought her to the door of Tim Gleeson's hut: a poor place of two rooms, with a low roof. Tim, a very idle, improvident, easy, and in general good-tempered man, sat on a stone at the door, his blue cloth legs stretched out, his rough face gloomy.

"You are not in the boat to-day, Tim," remarked Ethel.

"Not to-day, Miss Castlemaine," said the man, slowly rising. "I'm a going out with the next tide. This accident have took all strength out of me! When a lot of 'em come fizzing into the Dolphin last night, a saying our Polly was afire, you might ha' knocked me down with a feather. Mrs. Bent, she went on at me like anything, she did—as if it was my fault! Telling me she'd like to shut the inn doors again' me, for I went there when I ought to be elsewhere, and that I warn't good for my salt. I'd rather it had been any of 'em nor Polly: she's such a nice little thing, she is."

"Is your wife in doors?"

"No; she's off to the Nunnery. I've vowed to her that if she ever gets another end o' candle in the house, I'll make her eat it," concluded Tim, savagely.

"But she must have a candle to see with."

"I don't care: I won't have the young 'uns burnt like this. Thanks to you, Miss, for turning out o' your way to think on us. The brats are a squalling in doors. I've just give 'em a licking all round."

Ethel ran on, and gained the Dolphin, entering it by the more familiar door that stood open opposite the beach. Mr. and Mrs. Bent were both in the room: he, reading his favourite weekly newspaper by the fire, the Stilborough Herald; she, sitting at the table under the window, stoning a plate of raisins. The receipt for the oels was ready.

Ethel sat down by the table, putting a raisin into her mouth. John, who had risen to greet her, resumed his seat again. To say the truth, Miss Ethel liked running into the Dolphin: it made an agreeable interlude to the general dulness of Greylands' Rest. The screen, introduced into the room during the late wintry weather, had been taken away again. Mrs. Bent had a great mind to break it up, and burn it; but for that screen Ethel Reene would not have overheard those dangerous words. But no allusion had been made to the affair since by any one of them: all three seemed content to ignore it.

"You must excuse my going on with my work, Miss Ethel," said Mrs. Bent. "We've got a dinner on to-night, and I never knew of it till a few minutes ago. Some grand Inspector-General of the coast-guard stations is here to-day; and he and two or three more gentlemen are going to dine here this evening: Mr. Castlemaine for one. And me with not a raisin in the house stoned for a plum pudding! It's not often I'm taken unawares like this."

"If you will give me an apron to put on, I'll help you to stone them," said Ethel, taking off her black gloves.

"Now, Miss Ethel! As if I'd let you do anything of the kind! But that's just like you—always ready to do anybody a good turn."

"You give me the apron, please."

"I couldn't. If any of them from Greylands' Rest happened to look in, they'd be fit to snap at me; and at you, too, Miss Ethel. There's no need, either: I am three parts through the plums."

Ethel began to do a few without the apron, in a desultory kind of way, and eat two or three more. John Bent came to some paragraph in the newspaper that excited his ire.

"Hear this!" he cried. "Hear it, Miss Ethel! What a shame!"

"We have been given to understand that the rumour so freely circulated during this past week, of a matrimonial engagement having been made between Mr. Blake-Gordon and the heiress of Mountsorrel, has had no foundation in fact."

"The villain!" cried Mrs. Bent, momentarily forgetting her work. "He can hardly be bad enough to think of another yet."

Ethel's work was arrested too. She gazed at John Bent, a raisin in one hand, a stone in the other. That any man could be so fickle-hearted as this, she could scarcely believe.

"I knew the tale was going about," said the landlord; "I heard it talked of in Stilborough last market day, Miss Ethel. Any way, true or untrue, they say he is often at the Mountsorrels', and——"

John Bent brought his words to a standstill, and rose. There had entered a rather peculiar-looking elderly gentleman, tall and upright yet, with a stout walking-stick in his hand. He wore a long blue coat, with wide skirts and brass buttons, drab breeches, and top boots. His hair was long and snow white, his dark eyes were fiery.

Taking off his broad-brimmed hat with old-fashioned courtesy, he looked round the room: at Mrs. Bent and Ethel stoning the raisins. It is just possible he mistook the latter for a daughter of the house, dressed in her Sunday best.

"This *is* the Dolphin, I think!" he cried dubiously.

"At your service, sir," said John.

"Ay, I thought so. But the door seems altered. It's a good many years since I was here. Oh—ay,—I see. Front door on other side: and you are its landlord—John Bent."

"Well, sir, I used to be."

"Just so. We shall do. I've walked over from Stilborough to see you. I want to know the truth of this dreadful report—that has but now reached my ears."

"The report, sir?" returned John—and it was natural that he should have his head filled at the moment with Mr. Blake-Gordon and the report touching *him*. "I believe I don't know anything about it."

"Not know anything about it! But I am told that you know all about it. Come!"

Ethel was drâwing on her gloves to depart. John Bent looked back at the stranger.

"Perhaps we are at cross-purposes, sir. If you will tell me what you mean, I may be able to answer you.

"Him that I would ask about is the son of the friend of my early days, Roger the Careless. Young Anthony Castlemaine."

The change of ideas from Mr. Blake-Gordon to the unfortunate Anthony was sudden: John Bent gave a groan and coughed it down. The gentleman resumed, after turning to look at Ethel as she went out.

"Is it true that he, Roger Castlemaine's son, came over the seas to this place a month or two ago?—and took up his abode at this inn?—and put in a claim to his grandfather's estate, Greylands' Rest? Is that true?"

"Yes, sir."

"And where is he, this young Anthony?"

"I don't know, sir. I wish I did know."

"Is it true that he disappeared in some singular way one night—and that he has never since been seen or heard of?"

"That's true, sir—more's the pity."

The questioner took a step nearer John Bent, and dropped his voice to a low, solemn key.

"*I am told that foul play has been at work?*"

"Foul play?" stammered John, not knowing whether this strange old man might be friend or foe—whether he might have come there to call him to account for his random words.

"That the young man has been put out of the way by his uncle—James Castlemaine."

(*To be Continued.*)

MY FAIR CLAIMANT.

I HAD just returned from India, after five years' residence in Pagoda-land. I had been fortunate beyond all expectation, and now, at eight-and-twenty, had attained to a position in an eminent mercantile house that insured me present competence and opened out before my eyes the prospect of wealth in the future.

When I came back to England with uninjured health and undiminished energy, a sense of loneliness saddened me, nevertheless. My father and mother both died before I completed my college career; and I had neither brothers, nor sisters, nor cousins. I should have been alone in the world but for an old maiden lady, an aunt of my mother's, who took an interest in me, and proposed not only to enable me to continue my studies at college, but to make me her heir, on condition that I should enter the Church.

I felt grateful to the dear old soul, and having no particular bent any other way, I, for two years, devoted myself to preparation for the pulpit. Gradually, however, a conviction gained ground in my mind, that my vocation was not that of a preacher. At last I felt the necessity of stating the fact to my aunt, who thereupon quarrelled with me, and sent me about my business.

After that I knocked about London in a purposeless sort of way till the few hundreds that formed my inheritance were nearly exhausted, when a friend who had received an appointment in India proposed to me to accompany him. Having no ties in England, I closed with his proposal, most luckily for me as the event proved.

I had now just returned, as I said before, and had taken apartments in St. John's Wood, and the first Sunday after my arrival, strolled across the park in time for morning service at one of the churches beyond the eastern boundary. I walked slowly; the aspect of an English Sunday was delightful to me after my long absence. The service had begun when I entered the church, and was shown to a seat running parallel to the wall, in one of the side aisles, the rows of seats facing the pulpit being before me.

As I stood up to join in the service, my eyes were attracted by one of the loveliest faces that ever gladdened the heart of man—at least, so it appeared to me, accustomed as I had been to the dark or pallid beauties of the East. She stood so that I could not look straight before me without seeing her, and I must confess my thoughts, that morning, were not as devoutly fixed upon my book as they ought to have been.

When the organ ceased, she happened to turn her head, and her eyes caught mine. With a start and a vivid blush, she regarded me a

moment, and a bright smile irradiated her face. She nodded, and made a movement with her lips as if to form some word, but the prayers began and she turned away again, keeping her head bent over her book. During the interval before the sermon, however, she again smilingly glanced towards me. Then touching an elderly gentleman who sat near her on the arm, she whispered in his ear. I perceived an expression of surprise on his countenance, that changed to a smile, as he also looked towards me and nodded.

What did it mean? I felt completely puzzled. I tried to recall to mind the people I had known before going abroad, but the countenances of those before me were perfectly strange to me. The lady must number some three or four-and-twenty years, I thought, so that five years before she would have been little different from now, and it was totally impossible I could have seen that face and have forgotten it.

But a greater surprise was in store for me. The service over, and the congregation beginning to move, the lady came forward, holding out her little delicately gloved hand.

"Francie," she said, or rather whispered, for people were crowding about us, "did you think I should not know you? You must have come here to meet us; did you intend not to speak?"

I felt that there must be an error somehow, but I could not resist touching the hand held out to me. With those deep blue eyes full of a sort of reproachful entreaty raised to mine, I was bewildered, and I am afraid I reddened and stammered in a stupid manner, as I expressed my fear that there must be a mistake.

I was interrupted, however, by a touch on the shoulder from the elderly gentleman before mentioned, and the exclamation, "All right, come along; Mrs. Hargrove will be delighted to see you. We'll have it out afterwards."

Well, we were stopping the way, and a crowded church is not a favourable place for explanations, so I followed; the blue eyes looking back upon me as we reached the porch with another glance of entreaty, and lips that seemed to say "Come."

I again stopped as we reached the open road. "I really must not intrude upon you under a misconception," I said. "My name is Trafford."

"Trafford is it?" returned the gentleman I took for granted was Mr. Hargrove, with a curious smile I did not know how to interpret. "Well, perhaps it is more prudent." This he said in an undertone; then aloud, "Come, Mr. *Trafford*; you surely don't intend to fight shy of us? Why, Edith, there, would break her heart!"

Another vivid blush, and a quickly withdrawn look, half shy, half imploring, finished me off. Why should I not accept the friendship so unexpectedly thrust upon me? Who could tell what might come of it?

When the mistake, whatever it was, came to be cleared up, could I not easily bring forward vouchers for myself, and ask permission to continue the acquaintance on my own account?

Mr. Hargrove lived close to the church; no time remained for further parley. He opened the door with a latch-key, and ushered me in. Edith—as I had ascertained, the name of my enchantress to be—immediately ran up stairs, and I heard her voice calling, “Mamma! mamma! Francis has come home—he is here!”

We had scarcely reached the dining-room, where a plentiful luncheon was set out, when I heard the hurried rustling of silk, and a lady entered, holding out both her hands.

“My dear boy,” she said, “you’re welcome back to England!”

It was the first welcome I had received.

“The Indies seem to have agreed wonderfully well with you, Francie. You’re twice the man you were, and ever so much handsomer. Isn’t he, my dear?” said Mr. Hargrove.

“Well, Francie, I must say you are remarkably improved. You will excuse an old friend for saying so. I am not quite sure that I should have recognized you as quickly as Edith did. But being sunburnt and wearing a beard makes a difference.” So saying, Mrs. Hargrove motioned me to a chair opposite Edith, who just then came in, and sat down to the table.

I began to feel puzzled again. Did they know me after all? and ought I to know them? They seemed to be aware of my sojourn in India, and it was quite true I had not cultivated a beard before leaving England. And though I had never been accustomed to be called “Francie,” it was not an unlikely substitute for my name “Frank.”

In this state of perplexity I answered that I had not suffered from the climate, and that, of course, five years ought to make a difference in manliness.

“And you have done well for yourself?” Mr. Hargrove asked, casting an approving eye over my outward man.

“Fortune has done well for me, sir,” I replied.

“I am glad to hear it, heartily glad,” returned Mr. Hargrove. “But what do you mean by fortune?”

“I mean that I owe my rise in a great measure to a happy accident,” I rejoined. I then related how I had become aware of an impending crisis, and how, by immediately acting upon my knowledge, I enabled my employers to realize a large sum, and brought myself under their notice. I concluded by stating that I had now returned as junior partner.

“In what house?” Mr. Hargrove inquired.

“Amory and Gregson,” I answered.

“By George! That’s capital! Well done, Francie!” he ex-

claimed. "I should not have given you credit for either the intelligence or the pluck necessary for such a stroke."

"O, papa!" interposed Edith.

I smiled. I had not known that want of pluck had ever been one of my reputed failings.

"I suppose you have seen no one since you came back?" said Mr. Hargrove, leaning towards me in a confidential manner.

"No one but my partner," I replied.

"I think I can make it all right for you in that quarter, you know. It is time bygones should be bygones." And Mr. Hargrove nodded, as much as to add, "Trust to my influence."

Could he make it all right for me? He must be on intimate terms with my Aunt Dunstanley, then, and I ought, at any rate, to know the name. Hargrove—I racked my brain in vain; I only became more bewildered.

I thanked my kind entertainer, however, and said that the offence I had given had always been a subject of regret to me, and that I should rejoice to be received into favour again.

"Right," responded Mr. Hargrove; "and there was cause of offence, certainly," he added, significantly.

A few more questions as to my present standing and prospects were asked and answered; and then I rose to go, still more than half doubtful whether I was an intruder, or whether I had suffered some strange lapse of memory.

"I am so glad you have come back in time for my birthday, Francie," said Edith as I took leave. "We are going to have an evening-party, and mind I shall never forgive you if you do not come in time to dance the first dance with me."

I do not know what I replied; something dreadfully idiotic, I am sure. I returned home scarcely knowing whether I walked on my head or my heels. I forgot my dinner, forgot my afternoon cigar, forgot everything but Edith Hargrove.

Business did not get on well that week. Edith's face kept appearing to me when I ought to have been thinking of nothing but invoices and bills of lading, and her voice sounded in my ear and made me absent when spoken to. I had to tear up a sheet of paper, having found myself addressing a respected Asiatic correspondent of our house as "My dearest Edith," and our head clerk gravely brought me back a cheque on which I had signed myself "Yours, devotedly, Frank Trafford." I found out that to pass Mr. Hargrove's house was the nearest way to the city, and once caught sight of Edith's face at the drawing-room window.

On the Thursday, when I arrived at home, I found Mr. Hargrove's card, with an invitation to the dance on the following Wednesday. This, as it was addressed to Mr. Trafford, I persuaded myself that there was no reason why I should not accept.

The following Sunday found me in the same seat at church, and again I accompanied home to luncheon my new, or old friends—for I could not yet clearly see my way through the mystery of my reception. A Mr. Stedhall happened to be with them that day, so no opportunity occurred for private conversation that might have enlightened us as to our mutual relations.

Being a lovely afternoon, Mr. Hargrove proposed that he, Mr. Stedhall, and Edith should walk across the park with me. The two elder gentlemen walked on in front, and I dropped behind with Edith. She began to question me about my life in India, and I, having no reason for concealment, told her of my difficulties at the beginning, and how much my friend Fergusson had helped me in making the first start. As I looked at my companion I perceived that there were actually tears in her eyes.

"I always told them that all you wanted was a good start," she said. "If ever I meet that Mr. Fergusson, I am sure I shall love him for his kindness to you."

This was undoubtedly affectionate, but, under the circumstances, slightly embarrassing. However, she seemed to have had an accurate knowledge of me, and of my circumstances. It was quite true, a good start was all that I had wanted.

"It is very odd," she resumed, after a pause, "but we always thought of you as in the West Indies."

"I was never in the West Indies: I went direct from here to the East," I replied.

"Ah! it must have been Mrs. Summers' mistake, then," she said; "but go on, tell me more; I am so interested."

Who the deuce is Mrs. Summers, I thought to myself; but as the question was a matter of no consequence, I did not put it, but complied with Edith's request to tell her more, exerting myself to make my description as entertaining as possible, till we arrived at the house where I had taken apartments. Here I ventured to suggest to Mr. Hargrove that, if they would do me the favour to walk in, I could show them some Indian and Chinese curiosities.

The invitation was frankly accepted, and a pleasant hour passed. When they left, Edith delighted me by taking from my hands a carved ivory box, and a Chinese painted fan. It was perhaps well that the cashmere shawl and the tiny service of real egg-shell porcelain, intended as a propitiatory offering to my Aunt Dunstanley had been locked up, or I should probably have pressed them also upon the fair girl who in so extraordinary a manner claimed me as a friend.

On the Wednesday morning I chartered a "Hansom" and drove off to Covent Garden, where I selected a bouquet of the choicest roses I could lay my hands on, "regardless of expense." These I left at Mr. Hargrove's door before taking the train for the city.

Need I say that I was amongst the first arrivals in the evening? Edith came floating towards me in clouds of white, my roses in her hand.

"O Francie, how nice of you to remember my taste so well!" she exclaimed, as she gave me her hand.

I made no disclaimer, though in the choice of roses I had consulted my own fancy, being necessarily ignorant of her preferences. I merely pressed the little fingers, and reminded her of her promise for the first dance. Whatever mistake or misconception there might be, I did not propose to seek an explanation that evening, but determined to make the most of my time in endeavouring to render myself acceptable. My anxiety to gain a footing as a friend on my own account was intense, as how could I know how matters might turn out?

In the course of the evening, after a waltz, Edith and I turned into the conservatory. After talking for awhile, and finding more and more how singularly our tastes and opinions agreed, Edith dropped into silence. By and by, she drew off her glove, and began turning round on her finger a ring set with turquoise and pearls in the form of forget-me-nots; evidently with the intention of attracting attention to it.

I turned first cold and then hot, while a sharp pang darted through my heart. It struck me that it must be a betrothal ring, and that becoming aware of the attraction she had for me, of my admiration, she had taken this means of letting me know that she was pre-engaged. Shyly glancing up, she observed the emotion I could not conceal.

"You see I have worn it all this time;" she whispered softly. "I believed in you when no one else did, and oh! how glad I am that you have justified my faith in you!"

I drew a long breath, feeling as a criminal must do when a reprieve is announced. But what could I say? I longed to take her in my arms, to press her to my heart, but this I had no right to attempt. Neither could I put her to the confusion of letting her see that she had been making that sweet confession to a wrong person. I fancied I could perceive in her eyes, and in her voice, that her heart might turn towards me, and I resolved to win it if possible. How did I know who and what the real "Francie" might be? Some one perhaps, from remarks Mr. Hargrove had let fall, quite unworthy of her. I only wished he might remain where he was, and not turn up to trouble us, for I resolved not to give her up to a rival who perhaps, after all, only existed in idea.

Fortunately, I was not called upon at that moment for any line of action, for the partner to whom Edith had promised the next dance came to claim her, and soon after I left.

In a few days business summoned me to Liverpool, and I had only just time to leave my card at Mr. Hargrove's door before I went. My affairs detained me at that busy centre of commerce upwards of a week.

One evening, on returning to the hotel where I had put up, I found

the passage blocked with luggage. This did not surprise me, as a West Indian steamer had just arrived, and this particular hotel was largely patronized by the voyagers across the "big drink." Steering my way amongst the impediments, my eye caught the direction on one of the boxes.

"Mr. Francis Goodwin,
"Passenger."

"Francis Goodwin! It happened to be a name connected with no pleasant associations, and one that had scarcely crossed my mind for years. There had been a ne'er-do-well youth at college of that name, between whom and myself so extraordinary a likeness existed that I got the credit for more than one of his scrapes, and even narrowly escaped being rusticated. It was not my place to peach, and he would have allowed me to have been the scapegoat—sneak as he was—if my tutor fortunately had not been able to prove that I had been engaged in reading with him at the very time the little game in which I was supposed to be concerned was played out.

I came across Goodwin again in London, and found him as idle a vagabond and as great a sneak as ever. He was then connected with a merchant's house, but on account of a disgraceful transaction that, though never quite proved against him, was more than suspected, he was compelled to leave, and was recommended to go abroad. I became cognizant of the affair through Fergusson, and with the knowledge I had of his character, entertained not the shadow of a doubt of his guilt.

The sight of the name on the big sea-chest recalled all these facts to remembrance. Thought succeeded thought rapidly. Could it be possible that this vagabond was the Francie for whom I had been mistaken? My physiognomy was surely not modelled after so common a pattern as to have more than one counterpart in the world. It was a question I could set at rest, and at once.

I changed my intention of going into my own apartment to write letters, and turned into the coffee-room instead, and there, sure enough, seated at one of the tables was the individual I expected to see. But, good heavens! Could that loose-limbed, fishy-eyed, sallow-complexioned, weak-jawed individual bear any resemblance to me? I do not think I have more than my share of vanity, but I must own a cold shudder ran through me as I asked myself the question. I satisfactorily answered it in the negative, however. Goodwin was immensely altered, and had evidently gone to the bad at a quick pace. I walked up to him as he sat, his head half buried in a newspaper, and laid my hand on his shoulder.

"Goodwin," I said, "what brings you back to England?"

He started as if he had received an electric shock, and turned as white as the yellow of his skin would allow.

"Halloa, Trafford!" he exclaimed, holding out his hand with a futile attempt at appearing unembarrassed and glad to see me. "Why, who would have expected to meet you here?"

"There are more improbable places than Liverpool wherein to meet a man of business," I replied. "You have just landed, I suppose?"

"Yes, just landed, and awfully seedy," he returned.

"I should have thought you would have done better to remain where you were," I said.

"Why so?" he asked, with a quick, suspicious glance.

"If you don't know, it is no matter," I answered, as I drew out my cigar case. "Have a cigar, and come up to my room. I should like to have a word with you."

Again the suspicious glance as he took a cigar.

"You need not be afraid," I said, in answer to his look; "I have no wish to rake up old stories."

"All right, old fellow, I'll come," he rejoined, as he languidly rose from his seat, stretching himself with a half-suppressed yawn.

"What will you have?" I asked.

He chose brandy; so ordering the waiter to take what was wanted upstairs, I led the way, my former counterpart following.

When I had got him comfortably seated, with his cigar in good order, I began cautiously to feel my way by asking him what he had been doing; and thereupon he confided to me a tissue of idleness, weakness, and general incapacity, such as it had never before fallen to my lot to contemplate. Of course, he laid everything to the score of ill-luck. I never knew an imbecile who hadn't a stone to fling at fortune.

"And what do you intend to do now?" I inquired.

"I shall go up to London; I have friends there, even if my family will not help me," he replied.

"Do you happen to know anyone of the name of Hargrove?" I asked, relighting my cigar, with a pretence of indifference.

"Hargrove! I should think I did," he returned, the look of uncomfortable suspicion returning to his face. "What do you know of the Hargroves?"

"I met them a little while ago, quite in a chance way, and from something Hargrove let fall, I fancied they must be friends of yours."

"Oh!" he rejoined, seemingly reassured. "You know Hargrove was in my father's office; my father thought great things of him, and lent him money when he wanted to begin business for himself. You see, after that, while my father kept losing money—worse luck—Hargrove kept making it. That is how it was. Of course the money lent was paid back, and went with all the rest, but old Hargrove seemed to think he could never do enough for me. He got me into that situation, and I believe intended to take me into his business ultimately, when that infernal story came out. I suppose you know Edith?"

"I have seen Miss Hargrove," I replied. I asked no further questions. I knew that my man was like one of those ill-seasoned casks that are sure to leak sooner or later; and by-and-by, sure enough, it all came out with many complaints and needless expletives.

It seems that Edith and he had been companions in childhood, and he had taken advantage of her old feeling of kindness for him and her tenderheartedness to work upon her compassion. He had made love to her more for the sake of the fortune she would inherit than from any profound attachment to herself—that much I gathered from his confession. He had tried to persuade her that she alone could be the saving of him, but she refused definitely to bind herself till he had proved himself more of a man. He did not use that expression, but I give the meaning of what he did say. She had, however, accepted a ring, with the understanding that if he returned to England in such a position as would enable him to speak to her father, she perhaps might not say him nay.

I ground my teeth while I listened. Could it be possible that Edith would love, would engage herself to this idiot? Would he be able to persuade her that he had fulfilled the conditions?

I suppose he observed a frown on my brow, for he said anxiously: "I say, old chap, you are not going to put a spoke in my wheel, are you?"

"Not I," I answered, with the mental remark: "You may be trusted to do that for yourself, my fine fellow, or I'm much mistaken. Look here, Goodwin," I continued aloud. "So far from interfering between you and Hargrove, I will lend you a helping hand myself, if I can. But upon one condition."

"What is that?" he inquired dubiously.

I then reminded him of old college-days, and the confusion that had arisen from the singular likeness between us. I also told him, as much as I thought necessary, of the mistake, as I now clearly perceived it to be, that had been the means of introducing me to Mr. Hargrove's family.

"Now, I don't want there to be any mistake," I went on. "I wish to be received there on my own merits, and what I desire is that we should go up to town together, and that we should present ourselves to Mrs. Hargrove together. She will then see with her own eyes that we are not one and the same person."

To this Goodwin agreed. He was anxious to get to London, where he seemed to be convinced some wonderful stroke of good fortune awaited him; all his former backslidings being, of course, sunk five fathoms deep; and, as I could easily conclude the business that brought me to Liverpool the following morning, we decided to start by the afternoon train.

I took all the arrangements into my own hands, and carried off my

man as proposed. For fear he should give me the slip, when we arrived in London I took him home, and got my landlady to give him a bed. The following morning Goodwin tried to wriggle out of the agreement. He would rather see Hargrove himself first, he said. But I would not listen; I had too much at stake, and was determined to ascertain at once what chance I had with Edith.

"If the door is to be closed against me in that quarter, the sooner I know it the better, for the sake of my own peace," I said to myself.

When I sent for a "Hansom," and my companion found I could not be moved from my resolution, he submitted, saying that he only wanted to see Mr. Hargrove first for fear of agitating Edith by coming upon her too suddenly.

I assured him, however, that her agitation on her supposed recognition of him had not been excessive, so that excuse was not valid. It was a silent drive. In spite of my assumed calmness, my heart was in my mouth, as I reflected that the next hour might level with the ground the beautiful fabric I had built up in imagination. But as I had told myself before, if such was to be my fate, the sooner I knew it the better. I felt, therefore, thankful to find that the ladies were at home, so that I should have to endure no further suspense.

Had it been a less serious matter to me, I should have been amused with the start of surprise and the look of bewilderment with which the announcement "Mr. Trafford and Mr. Goodwin" was received.

"Give me credit for my self-abnegation, Mrs. Hargrove," I said. "I have brought you the real "Francie."

Goodwin had never wanted for assurance of a certain kind, and now proved equal to the occasion. He stepped forward to the front, and saluted Mrs. Hargrove with effusion, before she had time to utter a word. He then turned to Edith, who had stood like a statue since she had first risen from her seat, and took her hand. I think he would have saluted her also, but with a look of grief and reproach directed towards me, she snatched away her hand, and, bursting into tears, fled from the room.

Many months have elapsed since that morning. Then the summer was in full glory; now another spring, with gentle showers and sunny gleams, is wooing the blossoms to unfold. For a long time Edith drew back into such coldness and reserve towards me that if it had not been for the friendship of Mrs. Hargrove, to whom I confided my doubts and my wishes, I should almost have despaired.

I found from my kind consoler that Edith could not forgive herself for the mistake she had been betrayed into. Moreover, she had some romantic notion that she had pledged herself to Goodwin. Nothing should induce her to marry him, she told her mother, but she did not

feel as if she ought to permit the attentions of another, till he set her free.

In the meantime, Goodwin made himself decidedly obnoxious. He plagued Mr. Hargrove and me. That might be endured; but he tortured Edith, and that could not be endured. His family would have nothing to say to him, in spite of Mr. Hargrove's attempted mediation. His usual ill-luck pursued him in London. Nothing proposed to him exactly suited. In short, he wanted an income, but desired that it should come without trouble or exertion on his part. Sometimes he talked largely about the free life of the Colonies, and the fortune he could make if he could only get a start in Australia. So, one day, after he had been making himself peculiarly unpleasant, I went to him and asked him point blank, how much he would take to leave the country.

He made some show of bluster at first, but in the end we came to terms. Mr. Hargrove wished to take the whole expense of shipping him off upon himself, but this I would not allow, as the arrangement had been my own. It cost a good sum, but all I can say is that I considered it well laid out money.

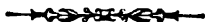
My aunt Dunstanley is staying with me at present. She is almost as much in love with Edith as I am. She has gone this afternoon, on a diplomatic mission of her own undertaking. The egg-shell porcelain is set out in readiness for her afternoon cup of tea on her return. I pace the room restlessly, anxiously. I hear her knock; she comes in with the Indian cashmere and a beaming smile.

"Well?" I exclaim, my heart making an anvil of my ribs.

"I have been looking at that house I spoke of the other day, and I think it will just suit you," says my aunt, throwing off her cashmere, and seating herself before the tea-tray.

I know what she means; I throw my arms round the dear old lady and give her a vehement hug.

"Spare your transports, my dear boy," she says; "and you may as well hasten the dinner hour. Edith expects you this evening."



FROM GASTEIN TO HALLSTADT.

THE week's rest, ordered by the doctor, like other weeks, came to an end; and with the happiness of going away was mixed the sorrow of leaving. All the visitors who had been there at the time of our arrival were departed. As the doctor had said, a few days back, it was nothing but coming and going, coming and going: every day brought some change: and therefore he had no resource but to, as the members of a certain religious body have it, sit loosely to the things of this world.

The day before departure, he came up to me with two or three of his photographs, in order, as he pathetically remarked, that it would be impossible to say of him "out of sight, out of mind:" he must not be altogether and completely forgotten. I assured him there was no danger of any such ingratitude arising; but he shook his head, as if he thought human nature was not always to be trusted.

"I will write you three of my proverbs," said he, "so that when you look at me you shall also hear me speak. You will then have still less excuse for forgetting these Gastein days."

Taking his largest photograph, he wrote the following sentences upon it; fearing he said with his imperfect knowledge of English he had not made his meaning sufficiently clear.

1. Misfortune is but good fortune veiled.
2. Bad qualities that cannot be accounted for are almost always symptoms of severe hidden illness.
3. Between two equal duties arising at the same time, choose always the less agreeable.

"There," said he, "you have the result of experience. By constantly bearing in mind the first proverb, I have been able cheerfully to submit to sorrow or misfortune; and I have never found it fail. The second has often prevented my quarrelling with people, or taking offence except in very grave matters. If a man is not in a perfectly sound state of mind or body, he is not altogether accountable for his actions. The third speaks for itself."

"If everyone followed your example there certainly would be more harmony abroad."

"Why should there not be? Of what use making this short life miserable by taking offence at small things and resenting them? It brings wrinkles to the brow and makes a man old before his time."

"If everyone were as great a philosopher as you——"

"Stop," he interrupted, laughing. "No satire, or I shall have to break my rule and take up the gloves against you."

"But I really mean it," I protested. "Your temperament is to be envied; and so is your life. You are a most happy man."

"If work makes happiness, I am, doubtless," he answered. "No man works harder. When the autumn takes away my work here, I go and seek it elsewhere: and find almost as much to do in Nice in winter as in Gastein in summer. But this is the life I like best. It is more my own home."

"Does Gastein never become unbearable to you?"

"Never. If a man has plenty of work to do, and feels himself useful, it will reconcile him to a far worse place than Gastein."

"It seems as if it would be insupportable to me for so long a time."

"Because your lines have been placed elsewhere. The back is fitted to the burden, my dear sir. That is a proverb that will beat mine."

"I have known, nevertheless, some backs break beneath their burden."

"Burdens, then, of their own making. If a man allows his destiny to be formed for him as it was originally intended, no trial or calamity will approach him that he cannot bear. But if he wilfully and impatiently takes his destiny into his own hands, as it is allowed of men to do sometimes, then he has no right to murmur if things go wrong: then, perhaps, occasionally the back will break."

"A fearful penalty to pay for a little wilfulness," I said, "though no doubt a just one. Well for such cases if there were a Sybil to consult, who could for one moment raise the curtain that conceals the future, and give warning of danger."

"I don't know," returned the doctor, solemnly. "I often think of that verse in the Bible: 'Neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.' It is as true of men now, as it was of the Jews of old."

"A melancholy topic for my last day," I cried. "What has drifted us into the mysteries and motives of human nature? Let us change the subject. Have you any advice to give me in regard to health? or any counsel as to the route I should travel. You know I want if possible not to go straight back to Salzburg."

"I do know," said the doctor; "and you are very wise. Never take the same road twice if you can avoid it: especially in a world as beautiful as our Tyrol. I have already advised you to go to Partenkirchen: it is quiet; the very place to rest in after the baths."

"Too quiet, I fear," I replied in answer to his description: an inn and a house or two besides. "I am weary of these closed-in places, and can bear no more of them. Partenkirchen is worse than Gastein, you say."

"Gastein!" he cried in amazement. "Gastein is as Paris or London in comparison. But the inn at Partenkirchen is very good, and every-

thing is extremely comfortable. The landlady, too, is eccentric ; a perfect study of character : a woman who will keep only such visitors as she fancies. If she likes you, she will go through fire and water for you ; let you turn her place upside down ; dine at midnight if it pleases you ; but if she happens on the other hand to feel her sympathies untouched, away you must go : she will make the place too hot to be borne."

"I should not care to encounter this eccentric landlady," said I. "There is no knowing what my reception might be."

"With a note from me," returned the doctor, "she would fête you. But she is undoubtedly peculiar. Once a whole family arrived, nine or ten in number ; and by some means did not contrive to please her. The next morning she sent up word that if they would go at once they should have nothing to pay."

"And they went !"

"Indeed they did. The message was too startling to admit of any parleying ; if they stayed peace was at an end : so, wisely, they packed up and departed. On the other hand, I once sent her two gentlemen ; patients of mine : the one was a general in the army, the other, I think, an idle man : they had nothing to do with their time but to travel about together and enjoy life. They went there with the intention of stopping a week ; but the cooking was so good, and the landlady so looked after their comforts, that they remained three months."

"It is not altogether surprising," I said. "I have learned here that good cooking if not essential to health is not unnecessary to comfort."

"True, true," returned the doctor. "And after the shortcomings of Gastein in this department, the excellencies of the eccentric landlady's cuisine would be appreciated, if not abused. Reaction, you know, is a great power. Will this, thrown into the balance, induce you to try Partenkirchen ?"

"No," with a very decided shake of the head. "I don't particularly care for the bœufs gras : but after this, I might do so, if much tempted. I have grown tired of this monotonous, out-of-the-world life, and can't begin it afresh in a strange place ; that, too, a place more lonesome, more shut-out than Gastein. We will dismiss Partenkirchen. What next have you to propose ?"

"Next and lastly," said the doctor, "if you are resolved to resist the attractions of Partenkirchen and its landlady, I would advise you to return as far as Golling ; then branch on the road to Gosau, and acquaint yourself with the beautiful lake scenery of the Salzkammergut."

This sounded a far more likely proposal than the last one. I had heard so much of the beauties of the Salzkammergut ; of Ischl, and Hallstadt, and the lakes ; that I resolved at once to adopt the suggestion. But it was a road seldom travelled by any one ; most people on

leaving Gastein returned as they came ; and it was doubtful if a coachman could be found willing to undertake the journey.

"But remember," said the doctor, "you must have rest of body and mind. I must extract from you a solemn promise that for three months there shall be no long walks, no mountain expeditions. Without that understanding you do not quit Gastein."

The great Gamskarkogel mountain was before us, with the hundred glaciers to repay the climber for his pains. I could not refrain from imploring, chiefly out of malice, for this one exception to the rule.

"Not whilst I have breath in my body," cried the doctor in a transport of rage. "When you have left me, if you choose deliberately to kill yourself in this manner, I cannot prevent it ; but so long as you are here and I am here ——"

He stopped, shook his head in a very terrible manner, and then laughed.

"I believe you are only trying to raise my just ire," said he. "And so I will be off. I will try and find an honest coachman for you to-morrow—since you needs will depart."

There was no lack of coachmen ready to seize upon the occasion : but some had never been that way in their lives and might in consequence go wrong : others demanded an exorbitant charge, and the doctor was the last man to submit to imposition. At length one turned up answering to all requirements : a young man, active, strong, intelligent ; and as events proved, a skilful, civil driver.

The next morning rose bright and sunny. A cloudless sky ; no sign of change ; happily for any who were on the move, for in an open carriage, rain would have been as welcome as snow in harvest. Amidst such scenery it was impossible to commit the crime of travelling in a shut-up vehicle.

Packing was soon accomplished, and at seven o'clock up came Marie with breakfast and a face as long as that of a condemned criminal. Poor Marie ! It almost seemed as if I had made some impression upon her tender heart, for as soon as I expressed sorrow at leaving, which in these last moments was unfeigned, she began to cry, and hastily putting down her tray, darted from the room to give private vent to her emotions.

She returned after a while, looking a middle-aged representation of April, at once all smiles and tears. Then up followed the doctor in her wake, wondering if he could be of any use ; begging and imploring that I would change my mind at the last moment, dismiss the coachman, and stay on another fortnight. He was all kindness and regret—for of course he could not prevail when matters had gone so far : full of counsel for the journey ; advice as to what ought to be done, and what avoided ; what might be seen without fatigue, and what on that score was forbidden fruit.

"No mountains," reiterated he at the last; "no long walks; no picture galleries: the latter are worst of all; fatiguing to the body, but horribly so to the mind. At the end of three months, you may do all you will: go out into the world; see pictures, climb mountains, or explore the wilds of Africa."

"Your caution is hardly needed," I said. "To tell you the truth, mountain-climbing is a mania by which I never was greatly bitten; I am not philanthropist enough to explore unknown regions, and perhaps sacrifice my own life for no one's good; as for picture galleries, I can make no rash promises about them. You are trying me too much."

"No promises!" cried he with a glare. "Then I will make you swear—take a vow. Swear that——"

But before he could proceed further, Marie's voice—she had again left the room—was heard below shrilly summoning the Herr Doctor to settle some doubtless important matter; and when he returned to the room he had forgotten all about the vow to be taken.

Just before leaving, Marie came up with a large bouquet—she had sadly ravished the poor doctor's garden—which she presented to me with a grace and bearing that would have adorned a stage. But her emotion was real. Her tears were falling, and whilst on the one hand she chided herself for her folly, she renewed her sobs on the other.

"Surely the Herr would return next year. He would not be so cruel as never to come and see them again."

"Of course he will return," cried the doctor. "Marie, don't have such ridiculous doubts. My dear sir," turning to me, "you must come back to us next May for the baths, and to complete your cure."

I shook my head in doubt: a doubt verified with time. The next May came and went: but there was no kind doctor at hand to recommend a second visit, and Gastein was neglected.

"We cannot always do as we like," I said. "Inclination often points one way, destiny another. I may come to you again some day, but I fear it will not be next year."

We were all sorry to part, I think, for we had harmonized together: no interregnums of unpleasantness; no jarrings and discords: a very quiet, but a very even tenour had been preserved: and it is something to be able to say this even of a month in one's life.

At eight o'clock to the moment the carriage drew up: signal for departure. The luggage was stowed away: a last good-bye given to the rooms: a wonder whose home they would next become: a final look out around from the old balcony: down the stairs for the last time and out of the door, and down the steps: and then ready for action.

Of course they all came forth to see the last of us. A cavalcade headed by the doctor, Marie behind him; and then Sebastian and the

remainder of the household. Even the goats stretched out their necks as far as they could from the field adjoining the garden, wondering, doubtless, what the unwonted excitement at that early hour could mean.

At last we were off; and looked after one another; and waved and watched and watched and waved; until a cruel turn of the road broke the last link of parting.

It must be confessed that I felt somewhat of melancholy regret at leaving. I turned and stood upright in the carriage, and as we journeyed on, watched the place slowly fading in the distance. The gradual dying away of the roar of the waterfall, whose long foaming line might be traced when all sound had ceased: one object after another flickering out, one of the last if not the least, Straubinger's itself disappearing. My sensations were very different from those of four weeks since. Then all was strange and unknown; much had been anticipated, and intense disappointment had arisen in the first instance: in search of health and air, both had seemed about to prove delusive; and although these early anticipations had not been fully realized; although the robust health hoped for was still absent—though on its way, according to the doctor; yet something had certainly been accomplished. The baths had been taken; the beauties of the place had become familiar and loved: a picture as unfading to the imagination as if it stood out in life and reality on canvas to the eye; acquaintances if not friends had been made—friends who had certainly proved themselves friendly: hearts that beat with kindness, and steps that lingered not to serve; and voices tuned to the key of sympathy. Even music had had its appointed place, and the soft tones of the zither had once more attested to the power of melody over the soul of man—that art the most beautiful as it is the most Divine: one of the chains at least linking earth with heaven: stretching as perfectly from one to the other as did Jacob's ladder: each link possessing as much the beauty and influence of an angel, as did the angels of his dream. St. Cecilia herself could not long for more power than she possesses; or that the angel she drew down should have had a more abiding resting-place. Music had had its part, simple but full sweet: the mighty roar of the waterfall had done its best and its worst: the bad dinners had been eaten and survived, and seemed to have done no great amount of damage: and a quiet month had testified to the fact that man's wants here are few and may be easily satisfied, and that excitement is by no means necessary to life.

But as the minutes and half hours flew by, the magnificent scenery through which we were passing; the feeling of motion, though the pace was steady; of being once more an active member of mankind; softened some of the regret at leaving Gastein. It was perhaps a little ungrateful, but there it was, and it must be recorded. The villages of Hof and

Dorf Gastein were in turn left behind ; the wonderful Pass at the commencement of the long valley was entered, awaking all the emotions of a first acquaintance : the steep descent was commenced, and in time Leng was reached.

We first halted at Leng on the return journey, where a second breakfast filled up gaps in time and constitution, and Johann, the coachman, thought dinner would not come amiss to him. Whilst the horses baited and rested, I strolled out, and renewed acquaintance with the waterfall. Infinitely smaller than that of Gastein, it is thought by many to be of greater beauty. In situation it is most romantic, and empties itself immediately into the Salza, forming one of the many tributaries required to keep up the hungry demands of the torrent river. To stand on the river bridge, and look up and down upon the stream was almost enough to make a strong head reel. A shallow stream enough, its bed filled with great stones and bits of rock, some just covered and raising hillocks in the water ; others standing out proudly, as if they would stay or turn the on-flowing current : most of them worn smooth and slippery by the constant friction. Its force is tremendous : its noise like the noise of a restless sea upon the shore : you marvel whence comes the unfailing supply, especially when recalling the number of miles over which, with exhaustless energy, it pursues its course ; now widening, now contracting, but ever shallow, ever swift. When an unusual quantity of snow is thrown into it from the mountains—at that period of the year when the snows are melting—the colour becomes a dull, brownish gray, that takes from the purity of its white foam. As the world knows, this land is not so much the region of eternal snows as Switzerland : its scenery is on a smaller scale ; its mountains less cloud-reaching : but its beauty and romance, its wildness, its effect upon the heart and soul, the life of man, cannot be exaggerated or outrivalled. So the snows, instead of remaining for ever, cold and proud upon the mountains, dissolve in kindly feelings towards the earth, and transform themselves as by magic into water ; swelling and feeding this beautiful stream, until, reaching their final home in the mighty ocean, they yield up their existence into that of a power still greater than theirs.

After a time—it seemed a long pause, and Johann and the horses must have been very great eaters or very slow ones—we started off again. A great part of the day was before us, but so also was a long journey, and Johann whipped up his cattle as if he had a mind to rival in speed the stream beside which we were travelling. Presently St. Johann was reached. Johann had evidently a strong affection for the village whose name he bore—though, if conscientious, he would probably have hesitated to assume the saintly prefix—and for the pretty maid who ran out of the inn, as we passed quickly its sign flying in the wind ; a surprised look in her eyes, a pout on her cherry lips, as she wondered why he had not halted a moment to give her the accustomed greeting.

But it would never do to lose so much time on the road ; and in spite of Johann's sidelong glance and melancholy sigh, he knew that he must press on towards Werfen. One village succeeded another, until in the afternoon Werfen was entered and another rest earned.

Here, in this second halt, we dined ; well and reasonably. The landlady, whose fat sides alone were sufficient recommendation for the resources of her larder, brought in soup and a broiled chicken, finishing up with a pastry peculiar to the place. By way of dessert she placed on the table a large dish of wild strawberries, of which, without experience, the delicate and delicious flavour cannot be imagined.



WERFEN.

Before leaving the village I strolled once more into the churchyard, with its small, quiet graves : into the church, where at the first visit the organ was sounding and the villagers were assembled at their morning devotion. Now it was silent and deserted ; all were away fulfilling their daily tasks ; the priest perchance was composing his next Sunday's discourse ; or stealing a nap after a comfortable dinner.

Suddenly, in a moment as it seemed, a great bank of clouds came up from behind the mountains, and spread over the sky. The heat of the day had been tropical ; the clouds brought with them a feeling of closeness and suffocation still less endurable : rain began to fall ; large drops here and there, ending in a perfect torrent. Then came a flash of lightning, followed instantaneously by a peal of thunder

that went crushing amidst the hills, and rolling and echoing adown the valley.

What a grand sight and sound, this storm, amidst the wild surrounding scenery : for Werfen is one of the wildest spots on the road. The lightning was vivid and incessant ; the thunder loud and continuous : a crash and battle of the elements that now in fury seemed to vie with each other. The thunder rolled down the valley with a voice like to millions of war chariots in pursuit : one mountain nook after another caught up the terrible echo until the air was full of the sound of Nature's great diapason. The castle in which the Protestants had been so mercilessly persecuted : whence, after the most revolting tortures, their remains were thrown down the rocky precipices until they plashed with a dull thud into the rushing stream at its foot : stood out, high and conspicuous upon its stronghold, as if offering resistance to an avenging and Almighty Power. Many a time, in those bygone days, the monks must have quailed before these signs of Divine wrath : hiding their faces and perhaps repeating Paternosters in their conscience-stricken terror ; until the fury of the elements had passed away, and Nature, like the face of a pacified child, once more smiled through her tears. Many a pine-tree, struck down and blasted in its strength must have read them a warning, if they would but have looked and listened. But there the castle stands to-day, precisely as in centuries ago ; not a stone loosened from its place ; not a loophole blocked up ; a memento of dark ages and darker deeds ; a record of past error, and cruelty, and superstition ; a witness of present glory, and peace, and beauty.

Persecutors and persecuted have long passed away : superstition has yielded to the power of intellect and civilization ; to the triumph of truth and the good cause : life and light have won their way through fields of blood ; through fire and water ; through life and death ; through such human suffering and endurance as cannot be told : having overcome and trampled under foot all enemies. The struggle and battle have cost unnumbered lives, each one of which would tell perhaps of an unseen, unrecorded martyrdom : but unrecorded only until that day when they shall wake once more to their reward, the resurrection of life and immortality.

All have passed away : footsteps that echoed in those corridors of time, echo no more ; they are laid aside with the heads that plotted, and the hearts that suffered, and the hands that worked good or evil : but there stands the castle, and there perhaps it will remain to the very end. To-day amidst the black clouds, and the dark pines, and the frowning mountains, it was lighted up with a vividness no earthly power could yield. Almost it seemed to sway and tremble in its fierce contest with the storm, though this could have been but imagination : in reality its seat upon the rock is as firm and proud as in the days of

its youth : its battlements vigorous in their hoary age. It stood up in the valley, between the mountains, insensibly bringing to mind that verse of the Old Testament where Moses "stood between the dead and the living." All that was here, it is true, was a dead past ; the present, everything before me, was living ; a life full of vigour and heart-throbbing ; no sign of death or decay save in the little churchyard on the right, with its small graves and crosses bearing names of old and young alike, its dates of long since or of yesterday. It stood proudly challenging the mountains, not dwarfed by contrast with their great height. The path to it was steep and rugged, yet but for the storm I would have climbed it, and gone through the rooms : the scenes of thoughts and actions before which we need veil our faces, and close our ears, and hide away our sympathies.

With your back turned to the village, the castle was the only sign of human life and labour visible around : a vast monument of man's skill and greatness, and yet how small and puny when thus compared with the mountains. It frowned upon you, as if feeling that after all you had the best of it, and could build up and pull down at will ; whilst the mountains in calm, secure pride, shot forth their heads heavenwards : and the river—that had been steeped with the blood of martyrs, and carried far on its bosom the groans of the racked and the death-rattle of the dying ; mingling in a long farewell the wail of husband, brother, lover—now, unmolested, unburdened, pursued the current of its stream.

The storm at length cleared ; the last flash had shot forth ; the last echo departed ; the clouds broke up and rolled away as a scroll rolls away from before a flame, and once more the sun had free play. Time was passing and becoming precious ; a considerable distance still had to be travelled, and it was a matter of some importance, amidst rough roads and steep precipices, to come to a final anchor ere the perils of darkness and the night had set in. So, quickly, the horses were brought round and harnessed (laugh not at the harness !) and we were soon again on the road. The greatest heat of the day was passed ; the storm, also, for the moment had cooled the air ; the luxury of lying back in the carriage after dinner—which though simple might have satisfied an epicure—without bodily effort and exertion, was inexpressibly delightful. Under this influence the mountains seemed to wrap themselves round you in loving arms : the gurgling of the river lulled you into a sense of outward forgetfulness : a rushing, frothy, monotonous sound, broken now and then by a dull thud, as a log of wood came into violent contact with a stone. In this manner is the rapid stream utilized, and labour economized in a land where economy is essential to its well-being. The trees cut down and sawn into logs are thrown into the water, and left to find their way in solitude through many and many a long mile from their starting-point.

The afternoon wore on in a delicious dream ; the senses thoroughly alive, the body only inactive. Evening grew apace ; the sun had long sunk behind the mountains, and thrown out shadows, and cast depths and darkness amidst the pines ; the steep pass, that had required the strength of three horses in coming, was descended, and, about seven o'clock, was entered once more the quaint village of Golling.

Quaint and stiff as ever it seemed to-night ; quaint and beautiful. Here, too, there had lately been a procession, and against most of the houses were ranged trees and great branches, propped up like dummies at a show ; giving the place a holiday and festive look comically at,



GOSAN-MUHLE, LAKE HALLSTADT.

variance with its quaker-like angularity. As the carriage rattled down, I caught sight of the blacksmith's boy, who had accompanied us to the waterfall. He gave a glad nod of recognition ; perhaps on the lookout for another apple, or another keepsake that like the sovereign the Vicar of Wakefield gave his daughters was on no account to be changed ; but either his modesty got the better of him, or he was called away by his master, for he did not turn up again.

Whilst tea was brewing, as before I strolled out to stretch my legs and take another look at the place in the first flush of gloaming. As I did so, the vesper bell rang out for prayers. Immediately, all ceased their occupations and remained stationary, some falling upon their

knees, others standing with reverence. For a few moments the whole village, whether indoors or out, in church or away from it, was thus engaged in the solemn act of a general prayer and thanksgiving. Who could be unimpressed with the sight? or fail to recognize and appreciate the simple nature of these unworldly people?

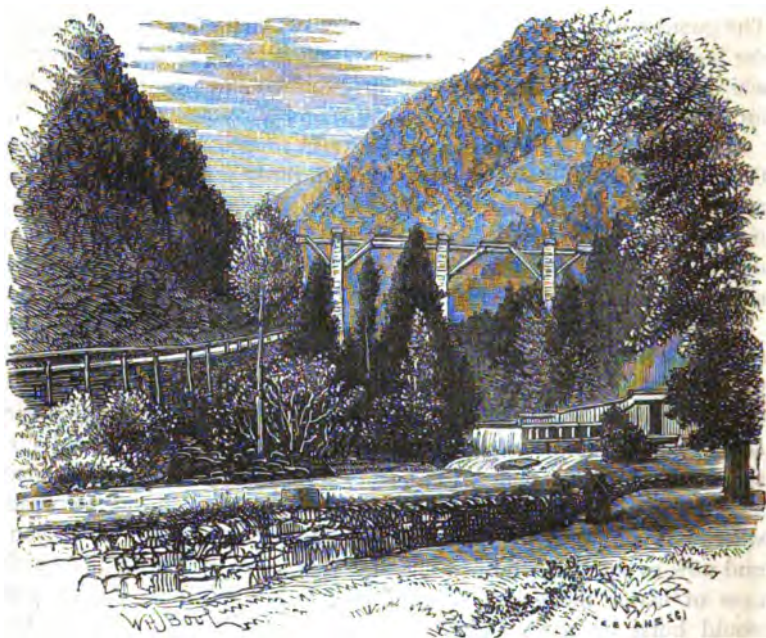
Another noisy, sleepless night, which here seems, just as much as the day, to have its stated work for every hour. Again the watchman went by at regular intervals, singing and proclaiming in a voice more doleful than ever; again the dogs barked their protest. At two o'clock up came the diligence from Gastein, with one inside passenger, too sleepy and comfortable apparently to turn out into the chilly night. The guard rang the bell, and the old clang awoke the old echoes through the building; the horses were changed, greetings passed, doors banged, whips cracked furiously; and away they dashed once more full gallop for Salzburg.

At half-past six we were to start off again towards Gosau, long before the appointed hour I was up and dressed, ready for breakfast and the road. It was a bright morning. The sun had risen splendidly, bathing the hills and landscape in a flood of rosy light; but when we first set out, as before the air was cold and raw, and rugs and wrappers were a stern necessity.

From this point the journey was opening up fresh ground, and from the doctor's description I was prepared for grand scenery. Grand and sublime it was indeed and in truth, for many hours. From six in the morning until about seven in the evening, we passed through a succession of panoramic views, of which no real representation could give the faintest idea. Up steep hills, and down hills yet steeper; by chain after chain of towering mountains; winding through narrow roads where now suddenly the heights seemed to be closing in upon you: and now as suddenly to open out and recede, so that with the quickness of magic the splendour and wild beauty of some hidden pass would burst upon you: now journeying side by side with the fast flowing stream; now crossing it on rustic bridges formed of rough logs of wood loosely thrown over a few rafters; so unsteady and apparently so unsafe that instinctively you sprang up ready for a jump if the vehicle overturned. Now losing the stream altogether from sight, yet by the flowing sound knowing it to be not far off. Now descending a long hill, so steep that it was almost as bad as scaling the side of a house; a hill like a winding staircase, in which, as the carriage turned and turned, it seemed momentarily about to pitch you over into the yawning precipice. To timid minds it would have been in the last degree terrifying; to others of a bolder type the very danger and excitement carried a charm. But for the sake of the poor horses, and the drag, and the vehicle, it was a good thing over. The roads in some parts are enough to break up any ordinary carriage; reminding one of the roads in the

wilder and uncivilized regions of Scotland : though the latter have infinitely the advantage of the comparison.

The first halt was made at St. Johann—a very different place from the St. Johann on the road to Gastein : more English in appearance than any village yet encountered. Here we breakfasted, and whilst the horses rested, inspected the church. It was more peculiar than most of its kind in the Tyrol. On the outside were several representations in relief from the Bible, a custom prevalent in some parts : an ugly, unsightly custom from the hideous manner in which the scenes are executed. But the strangest sight was a small building to the left



END OF THE VALLEY AND GOSAUSWANG.

of the church for funerals, and the decorations upon the walls. Cross-bones and other mournful and death-reminding objects met the eye ; and in a small, square box of glass, the skull of a woman : her age, name, and date of death, her exemplary life, her numerous virtues, and a career spent in doing good to the village, duly recorded in the inscription.

After St Johann, no especial halt was made. One long, steep ascent, lasting about two hours, necessitated four horses, and even then at times way was made with the greatest possible difficulty. Indeed the troubles of the road are so formidable that carriages seldom attempt the journey. But few it is to be imagined can tell what they lose by

passing it by, and pursuing the straight road on to Salzburg. It was one long drive of overwhelming impressions; each fresh turn bringing out some new feature in the landscape, grander and more sublime as it seemed than the last. In places the mountains were wild and rugged here and there huge overhanging fragments having fallen from the surface, revealing beneath a red, rock-like substance: in others they were softer and covered with verdure, pines, and innumerable clusters of the wild alpine rose.

In passing one of these mountains where the roses clustered some distance up the height, Johann's desire for adventure got the better of his discretion. In a twinkling he was off his box, and climbing up with the agility of a wild cat. Meanwhile the horses thinking they would like a little fun on their own account, started off for a quiet gambol. On one side was the mountain: on the other, within a foot or so of the carriage, the edge of a wild, deep precipice, at the bottom of which the river ran over its rocky bed. For a moment the man looked back, hesitating between horses and roses. The latter probably would have conquered, but not waiting to ascertain I jumped out and held them until his return. He soon came down, bearing in triumph a large bunch of flowers. His face beamed with smiles; his hands were covered in scratches; but the pride with which some of the blossoms were transferred to his hat, and some offered to the occupants of the carriage, would have atoned for deeper wounds. With that beaming look upon his face it was almost impossible to blame the man for deserting his post, seeing that in the end no harm had arisen. It was but the second time in his life he had made the journey, the first being five years previous: and with delight he had seized upon the chance of a change in the monotony of his usual route.

The mountains were most densely covered with pines at the Pass Geschütt, a wild, unearthly gorge. As we drew near the Gosauswang the road became good and passable, and the latter end of the journey was smooth and even. It gradually formed into a narrow, picturesque glen, leaving just room enough for the rapid torrent and the road. At length, a sharp descent, the bridge crossed, the Gosauswang passed—a sort of aqueduct bridging the chasm, and containing the pipes that stretch along the mountains for conveying the brine—and the Gosau-mühle, on the borders of the wonderfully picturesque lake of Hallstadt, brought that day's travelling to a close.

Johann was dismissed with a trinkgeld with which he was so delighted that he was positively about to testify his gratitude with a real German hug, from which the intended recipient only escaped with a backward spring.

AUNT JANET.

IT was a bright, beautiful September. The gorse and heather were brilliant on our Scottish hills. And we girls were in our glory, tramping after our father and the boys on their shooting expeditions, making ourselves useful in the carrying of provision-bags, and setting out impromptu repasts on the glorious hill-sides.

It was the bravest time in the whole year to us girls, and that is saying a great deal, for we had many brave times. "A sonsie set," the father used to call us, being rather proud, I think, of his healthy, rosy-cheeked, dark-eyed daughters, and big, broad-shouldered sons.

There were eight of us in all, four of each sort. I am afraid there was no special talent in the family, except the talent of being happy ourselves, and making others so.

I may just remark, before passing on, that we saw very little company, and hence, though the boys, through going out into the world, imanged to find wives as soon as they could keep them, we girls, though all grown up, had had no chance as yet of "settling." An expression, by the way, to which we greatly objected, because our aunts, in writing to our mother, invariably asked if she had any good news for them. It was time the girls should be "settling in life."

But on one bright morning in that fair September, the postman's horn resounded at the outer gate, and Johnny, the youngest, a long-legged creature of twelve, came striding in with a fat envelope for the mother, bearing the English postmark.

"Aunt Mary's writing," said mother, breaking the seal rather nervously. "Can anything be the matter? I never knew her write out of turn before, and I owe her a letter."

But we children, watching her face, were soon reassured, as a smile broke over it, which gave place, however, to a grave expression of regret.

"You read it out, father, and we'll decide in full conclave; I don't wish it left to me. I see Aunt Janet and Aunt Margaret have written as well, but theirs are only supplementary notes, supporting Aunt Mary."

The father then read as follows, while we went on devouring our bread and marmalade:—

"The Grange, Sept. 20th, 18—

"MY DEAR NIECE MARY, — I am aware that in writing again so soon, without awaiting your reply, I am offending against all precedent. But I trust you and my dear nephew-in-law will forgive me when you hear the purport of this epistle.

"Briefly, then, it is to invite one of your daughters, my grand-nieces, to

come and pay us a long visit at the Grange, the choice being left to yourself. Although I would suggest Kate, she being the eldest, and it being becoming that the eldest should be the first to be settled, as we know from Sacred Writ was the custom in the East from very early times.

"But I must explain myself more clearly concerning this matter.

"Briefly, then (a favourite phrase of Aunt Mary's, which she inherited as a legacy, I fancy, from her father, good Dr. Macpherson, a Minister of the Scotch Kirk, famous for the length of his discourses, and the delusive hopes he held out to the contrary by the frequent use of those encouraging words), it has grieved me and my sisters sorely from time to time, hearing nothing but denials from you concerning the *settlement* of our grand-nieces, and it has occurred to me, and been concurred in by your Aunts Janet and Margaret, that we have an opening here for one of them, which it would be culpable to neglect, in the person of a most estimable young man who has recently been appointed vicar of our parish.

"I need not add he is unexceptionable in every respect, or I would not recommend him. Moreover, he has confided to sister Janet (between whom and himself there exists a strong friendship, *Platonic, of course,*) that he desires a help-meet.

"Briefly, then, my dear niece, will you confide your daughter Kate to our care? We are in the vale of years, as you well know, and we would gladly see one of your children before we die.

"With all due respect to our nephew-in-law, and love to our grand-nephews and nieces,

"Believe me, your affectionate Aunt,

"MARY SUSANNAH MACPHERSON."

I think that last reason, about the "vale of years," carried the day.

At all events, after much indignation on the part of us girls, and much chaffing from the boys, at the idea of going for inspection thus, it was finally decided that I should accept the invitation.

"You won't have a chance of seeing the south every day, my dear," said the mother; "and I think your aunts have warm hearts under their stiff exteriors; but don't you feel bound to marry anyone, whatever they say."

"Oh, mother! she'd never have the face to come back unsettled," cried Ned. "It would be as bad as a fellow being plucked."

"I don't half like your going, Kitty," said the dear father kindly. "Make haste back again, my girl."

And so, amid hugs and kisses on all sides, I set off on my travels, one drizzling October Monday morning, about a month after the receipt of Aunt Mary's letter. I had an escort as far as York. But, oh dear! the long solitary journey after that, with the cold rain beating against

the shut windows, misty with the breath of many passengers, making the flat meadows through which we passed look dreariness itself! I felt pathetically pitiful for the meek-looking cows even, and thought I should like to spirit them away to our hill-side pastures just for a treat, as people take out city school-children into the country, to let them know there are green fields, and hedge-rows, and fresh breezes in the world.

But I must hasten on, as our train did, leaving smoky Bristol behind us, and puffing and panting along westward still, till at last we stopped at a rather large station: and, poking my head out of the window, I heard a respectable-looking elderly woman, of short stature, inquiring of a porter for me. Then I was escorted by the said individual into a curious sort of antique coach which was in attendance. On the box sat a still more antique-looking man, clad in a moth-eaten livery, which seemed to exhale a musty odour into the foggy air. But worst of all was the horse; the shaky state of its legs, and the air of calm resignation with which it hung its head, were too trying to contemplate, as I hurried into the interior.

I was left alone in my glory, the respectable female taking her place on the box. This relieved my mind of one uncertainty; for I had not ventured on any remark to her, not knowing whether she might be one of my aunts, and afraid of committing myself.

The town through which we passed seemed a nice one, as far as I could judge in the drizzling twilight. The streets were wide, and there were gay shop-windows just lighted up.

But we left all this behind us before we reached the Grange, which lay without the town, on the further side. At last we came to a high iron gate, passing through which we pursued a straight road in a field, skirted on the one side by a rather stagnant-looking stream, till we reached a little wooden bridge which spanned the said stream. Here the domestic alighted, and asked me, would I prefer driving round to the back entrance, or walking up through the garden. I preferred the latter, as the rain had ceased. So we passed through the little green gate, and across the bridge, to a long and straight gravel road, bounded on one side by a gloomy row of sombre cypresses, and leading up to a low, castellated-looking building, in front of which it made a sweep.

This, then, was the Grange! This was the enchanted castle where I was to meet my fairy prince! And these three erect old ladies, in stiff black brocade, standing in a formidable row on the top step to receive me, were my great aunts!

"Ye'er kindly welcome to the Grange, niece Katherine," spoke Aunt Mary, in the peculiar sing-song drawl of the ultra Scotch.

"And how may Misthress Donald, yer mother, be?" pursued Aunt Margaret, taking up Aunt Mary's tone in the same note, after the manner of clergy and choir in intoning.

"An' it's hungry and tired ye'll be by now," chimed in Aunt Janet.

And sure enough I was so hungry that I fancy my healthy Highland appetite rather astonished my good aunts ; and so tired that I actually fell fast asleep during Aunt Mary's long sing-song at family prayers, and disgraced myself on this first evening of my arrival, by nearly falling off my chair with a nod, in the awful presence of Tabitha the respectable female, Timothy the antique serving-man, and my three erect aunts !

But the soothing sing-song ceased at last, and Tabitha and Timothy retired, first making an obeisance in turn to the three ladies, who each returned the civility with a dignified bend.

I began to be puzzled as to the form of greeting expected of me. But, being humbled by my recent disgrace, I happily took the submissive line, and made a profound curtsy to Aunt Mary, who thereupon extended her skinny hand graciously, and said : " I am truly rejoiced to find that Misthress Donald, my niece, has brought up her offspring in a dacent manner, not in accordance with the unnatural familiarity of these degenerate days. And doubtless far travelling hath an evil effect on the eyelids."

So I got off better than I could have expected, and, having curtseyed and touched the cold fingers of my two other aunts, was conducted to my room by Tabitha, who preceded me through the long resounding passage with a melancholy lighted dip.

A curious old house it was ; I never saw another like it. It was all on one floor, save the kitchen departments, which were underground. True, you went up two or three steps from the hall to the long passage on which the bedrooms opened ; but this only took off a little height from the bed-rooms, and gave more to the kitchens ; it was still one story.

My room was at the further end of this passage, and looked most ghostly by the light of that farthing dip. There was a ponderous four-post bedstead, with heavy snuff-coloured curtains drawn close, giving it a funereal aspect ; similar curtains to the window, looking too heavy to be ever withdrawn to let in the sunlight ; and a massive dark oak wardrobe, filling one side of the room, and large enough to hide away two or three burglars, which was the first idea that occurred to me.

The remainder of the furniture was of the same sombre type ; but I think, tired out as I was, I should have tumbled into bed and fallen asleep in spite of it, had not a most oppressive odour of mustiness reminded me of Timothy on the coach-box, and made the idea of sleep impossible.

Yes, I felt convinced, as I stole cautiously near the awful wardrobe, sniffing as I went, that Timothy was concealed within it. Doubtless he was a cunning old rascal, who had observed my new gold chain and watch, as I entered the coach, and had hidden here with fell intent.

It began to be unbearable ; the more I sniffed, the worse it was.

I opened my bedroom door, but there was nothing but silence and blackness in the long passage ; not even the friendly chirp of a cricket to reassure me.

I would put a bold face on it, take the candle in my hand, and go bravely up, and inspect this awful wardrobe.

Picture my horror when, hastily pulling back the heavy oak door, retreating as I did so, my terrified eyes alighted, as I thought, on the very object of their dread. There was the dingy, moth-eaten coat erect, showing the tarnished buttons at the back. I did not stay to look more closely. Enough that his back was turned, and I might yet escape. I flew from the room, candle in hand, and, slamming the door behind me, held fast to the handle, crying out "Thieves ! murder ! help !" at the pitch of my voice.

First to the rescue came old Timothy himself. Enough to frighten anyone in their sober senses, with his red night-cap pulled over his nose, and his withered old legs showing beneath his brown night-shirt. But to me he seemed an injured angel.

"Oh ! Timothy," I said, impulsively, "I beg your pardon ; I thought I saw you standing in the wardrobe, and that you meant to murder me !"

The old man grinned from ear to ear, looking more grotesque than ever, as he said, "M'appen it ud be the bit of livery like ?"

Of course it was. Hung up in the spare wardrobe as a safe repository for bygone splendour. I was heartily ashamed by this time. The more so, that my aunts appeared at their three several doors, candles in hand, shrouded in long flannel dressing-gowns, while Tabitha, my next neighbour on the left, being destitute of that genteel garment, appeared at her door enveloped head and all in a blanket, not thinking it right that Timothy should see her in her night-cap, and yet unwilling to betray the baldness of her poor old head.

I had not the face to stay and answer the eager questionings, put in varying degrees of shrillness, but went back, locking the door behind me, and, tearing aside the snuff-coloured curtains, threw myself into bed, half laughing, half crying myself to sleep.

But all night Timothy was grinning at me from under his red night-cap, Tabitha was peering at me from the chink in her blanket, and my three aunts made me dizzy by a perpetual dance, hand-in-hand, like the witches in *Macbeth*, round a steaming pot, from which exhaled an unsavoury odour, compounded of the English fog and Timothy's musty clothes.

Such was the unpropitious commencement of my journey in search of a husband.

II.

I AM afraid it will be impossible to convey any idea to you of my misery during my first few days at the Grange, unless, indeed, you have ever been in a like condition. But if you can picture to yourself what the contrast would be to a healthy, vigorous, high-spirited creature, such as I was—between the joyous, busy hilarity of our home party, and the entire freedom of our lives among our Scottish hills, with their invigorating breezes, to the formal, constrained, prosaic routine of my present life, and the damp, muggy atmosphere in which I found myself, I think you will pity me.

Let me describe one day as a pattern of the rest. At eight o'clock precisely we assembled in the sunless north-fronting parlour for prayers. These, conducted in Aunt Mary's sing-song, were quite another thing to the hearty family prayers of my dear old home. Then the morning greetings were exchanged in almost the same words every day, varying a little as the season advanced and the weather was fine or the reverse ; as thus :—

"Good morning t'ye, sister Mary ; an' what think ye of the day ?"

"The clouds are a bit low, sister Margaret, but I'm thinking they'll clear at noon, maybe."

"Then ye'll no be disappointed of yer walk, niece Kate," would sum up kind-hearted Aunt Janet, who was generally the one to take note of me.

And then, without another word, we would seat ourselves, and get through breakfast with no further conversation than inquiries concerning the meal, such as, "Is the tay sweetened to yer liking, sister Janet ?" or "Is the porridge no to yer taste, niece Kate ?"

Breakfast over, Aunt Janet (the domestic sister) girded herself with an apron, and washed up the dainty china cups, while Aunt Mary disappeared in the regions below to order the unvarying order of the dinner ; and Aunt Margaret, the literary sister, sat bolt upright in her high-back chair, listening, with folded hands and shut eyes, while I, seated at her feet, read, for one hour precisely, "*Gibbon's Decline and Fall*."

Next came an hour's divinity with Aunt Mary, in the shape of my great-grandfather's sermons before alluded to, which would have been all very well had I read them myself ; but listening to her sing-song always gave me the fidgets, however good the matter read might be.

Then at twelve o'clock we set out on our walk. But what a walk ! Oh dear, how I came to hate that long straight drive by the side of the stream ! Up and down, up and down, two aunts in front, I behind with the other, never any deviation. For one mortal hour every morning, except when absolutely raining, was this treadmill pursuit of health gone through with.

At half-past one came dinner, the half hour preceding it being dedicated by the ladies to dress. The very homely stuff gowns of the morning were exchanged for the black brocades, and the first hour after dinner devoted to sitting up in state in the drawing-room to receive the very rare visitors.

Then I was free till tea-time, at half-past five; after which came a game of piquet with Aunt Margaret, in the gloaming, and then long whist till supper, at nine; then prayers, and to bed.

Such was our routine. My only free time was the two hours in the afternoon; but even then, as I was strictly forbidden to go off the premises alone, I was not in a much better plight. I could but go and poke up the pigs in the farm-yard, or wander round the great field by the hedgerows, peering over them at the country-people jogging along in their carts on the road outside.

My aunts made a rule never to walk into the town save on a Sunday, it being inconsistent with their dignity; and it was only on extra important occasions that the lumbering old vehicle and Timothy's musty livery was had out. In my longing for a change I foolishly asked to go with them on the first of these great shopping expeditions, but I never asked again. The stuffiness was something frightful. What with that, and the fatigue of the endless bargainings over half-yards of silk, &c., in the various shops, I was quite worn out by the time we got home, and had a good cry of weariness and vexation.

Truly the ragged urchins I had pitied were princes in good luck compared to me! So I thought.

But there was one hope left me. I had not seen my intended husband yet; and, for lack of all other interest, I began to think a great deal about him, and was thrown into quite a flutter of spirits, on the Saturday after my arrival, by Aunt Mary's remarking, as we separated to dress for dinner, "Our gude minister, Mither John Anderson, will be our guest at dinner to-day, niece Katherine, so I hope ye'll be for decking yerself in a modest and becoming attire."

"Oh! what shall I wear, Aunt Mary?" I asked, eagerly, feeling my face flush. "Would my new blue silk be too smart?"

"Nay, nay, child," spoke Aunt Janet, hastily, "sic a flaunty dress wad ill become a douce minister's wife."

"Hist, hist, sister Janet, what wad ye be putting nonsense the like o' that into the girl's head for? Minister's wife, indeed! I wonder at ye, sister Janet, a counting yer chicken sae muckle aforehand, and ne'er having the sense to keep yer thoughts to yerself. Ye might as well be sixteen as sixty, to judge by the slips o' yer tongue!"

So spoke Aunt Mary, in a white heat of anger, snubbing poor impulsive Aunt Janet in her very broadest Scotch. I had never heard any disagreement between them before, and, feeling moved to take up the cudgels for submissive Aunt Janet, who made no attempt to defend her-

self, I said quietly, as I left the room, "I won't wear my blue silk as my aunt does not wish it; but if you think to keep things secret from me, I may as well tell you at once that I know all about it. We have no secrets at home, and every one knew I came down on approval!"

So saying, I swept from the room with all the dignity I could assume. My peppery Scotch blood was up. "Reckoning the chickens" indeed! Of course I could have him if I chose! Could I stand this dull, damp South for life, under any circumstances, though? That was the question. But, at all events, he should give me the chance. I wouldn't go back "plucked," as Ned had expressed it. And, after all, he would be something young, that was a comfort, for had not Aunt Janet said that she remembered his father a little boy in frocks?

So I took extra pains with my toilet, and although I wore the grey alpaca as usual, in deference to Aunt Janet, I added rose-coloured ribbons here and there, a bright bow in my glossy dark hair, flying streamers round my throat, and a bright band and sash for my waist; so that the effect of the whole was gayer even than the blue silk would have been. And as I gave a hasty glance at myself in the ponderous mirror before quitting my room, I could not help thinking that I looked a cheerful bit of young life, in contrast with my sombre surroundings.

I would not go down till our guest had arrived, fearing a criticism of my rose-colour, and a possible order to discard it, vain young person that I was! But the bell resounded through the long quiet passages at last, and down I went, the brightness returning to my cheeks and eyes, in the expectation of meeting once more a glance of youthful sympathy.

Alas for human expectations! I am sure I started and turned pale on opening the door.

There he sat, warming his thin white hands over the fire. Young! Why he looked as if the term could never have been applied to him! I felt sure that if ever he had been a baby, (and I supposed there was no loophole out of that fact) he must have been one of those wizened, old-men-looking babes, that never crow, or cry, poor little souls, but behave with the utmost decorum, even when in long clothes.

The idea of Aunt Janet having known his father as a boy seemed too preposterous! When it required such a stretch of the imagination to picture him ever a lad himself, it was too much to expect one to believe that he had had a father who had been a boy within the memory of living witnesses.

Such were the thoughts (exaggerated, no doubt) that rushed through my mind during my first instant of surprise and disappointment.

But I had no time to ponder, for Aunt Mary came forward in great state to present me to their "douce" *young* minister, and then we marched in state in to dinner.

But I must describe my hero a little more particularly, or you may be fancying him grey and decrepit, which he was not.

No, he was tall and straight, very thin, with what little hair he had pale brown; face to match, eyes ditto, but capable of deepening to a much darker hue, as I afterwards knew to my cost.

As to his features, there was not much amiss with them, and his forehead was broad and intellectual. But all this I found out later. So absorbing was my first discovery that he was not, and never could have been young, that I did not care to look for redeeming points just then.

The dinner was silent for the most part; only from time to time I was startled by our guest's addressing some point-blank question to me across the table, entirely unconnected with any previous conversation. Most appalling these spasmodic queries were, ranging over geography, history, and what not. I never knew where I might be "put on," as the boys express it, and could not enjoy the extra good dinner for fear of what might come next. The questions, too, were put in such a manner to me that I felt for all the world as though I were being catechised like the children in church; and at last the oddity of it overcame me, and, in answer to some grave question about Glencoe, I disgraced myself by bursting into a merry peal of laughter, which resounded uncannily through the gloomy mansion.

Happily this was towards the end of the repast, as Aunt Mary, looking at me with the utmost severity, said—"Niece Katherine, I'll no put up with sic ill manners; ye'll just gae straight off to yer ain room, and no show yer saucy face amang us again the night. To think that one of our ain kith and kin, should hae treated an honoured guest sae ill!"

There was nothing for it but to obey, and a dull enough time I had in my sombre chamber. I tore off the pretty rose ribbons, and sat myself down on the floor in my misery, and, burying my face in my hands, burst into passionate tears.

I dragged down the long coils of my hair, and tore out handfuls in my foolish rage. The pain, I think, did me good. It brought me to my better self. I started up, and, catching a glimpse in the mirror of my tear-stained, angry face, and rumpled hair, I felt ashamed, and sitting down to rearrange myself, began to ponder on what my father and mother would think could they look in upon me now, and of how Ned would laugh at me for making such a fright of myself, and getting into such a tantrum for so slight a cause, and then I fell to thinking what there was to be wrath about. Surely the "douce" minister had done his best to draw me out, and I had repaid his efforts with downright rudeness. Perchance he was testing me with a view to the future. If so, I had assuredly been miserably "plucked."

Just as I had arrived at this point in my self-condemning meditations, some one knocked at the door, and Aunt Janet's kind old face peeped in at the door, as she said, "Misther Anderson is muckle concerned, my puir child, at yer banishment. He says there's nae sae great harm

in a young thing's laughing, and at any rate he hoped ye'd be forgiven this time, as he was the cause o' it, and sae Aunt Mary has sent me to bid ye be on yer best behaviour, and come down to tae."

I went up and kissed Aunt Janet upon this, and expressed my contrition, but added that, having made myself a fright, I did not like to come into the drawing-room. This, however, she overruled; so, having done my best, with washing of face, and dressing of hair, and redonning of the rose-coloured ribbons, to efface the marks of my recent passion, I returned with Aunt Janet to the company.

Don't you know how good and softened children are after a thorough outburst of naughtiness and tears? Well, that was my state now. I felt humbled and subdued, and most anxious to please. And I must say that the minister showed a youthful quickness of instinct, at all events, in the quiet way in which he distracted attention from my entrance, and took it as a matter of course my being there. Gradually I warmed up with the tea, and with the cheering appearance of a blaze from the wood fire lighted in honour of our guest.

We sat round it in the gloaming, and, on the minister asking me to sing, I surprised my aunts by complying at once, and warbling away one after another of our dear old Scotch ballads, so suited to the dreamy twilight, with their tender pathos, too sacred for the full glare of day.

I don't profess to be much of a musician, but I know I gave these dear old songs well, because my heart was in them, and, after all, that is the great point if you want to touch your audience, whether it be in preaching, singing, or speaking. But I was hardly prepared for the sensation produced by "The Land o' the Leal." I stopped, feeling my own voice choky, to find my three aunts crying quietly, and to find the minister's eyes fixed upon me with an earnestness that made my own fall.

How curious it is that, if you only strike deep enough into the hidden roots of human nature, you get at the grand harmony that exists in the innermost recesses of human souls, often the most discordant superficially. I no longer thought of my aunts as old and formal, nor of the minister as never having been young. We seemed all one in the tender emotions stirred up by that sweet song.

Soon after our guest took his leave, saying that he had still to give a last look at his Sunday sermons, and, after a more gentle good-night than usual from my aunts, we all separated for bed. And so the evening ended better than I could have hoped.

The next day was my first Sunday in these parts, and for the first time since my arrival the sun rose in a cloudless sky. By and by the church bells rang out cheerily from different sides, and I felt happier than I had done since my arrival as I accompanied my aunts to church. There at last I saw young faces enough. People were not all born ready grown-up, then, in this benighted South! Mr. Anderson's manner

was soporific, certainly, but his matter was very good. I could perceive that Aunt Janet's "douce minister" was above the average.

It was well that I did attend to his sermons, for, to my amazement, after the afternoon service, I was summoned with Tabitha and Timothy into the parlour, and bade stand with them in front of my Aunt Mary's high-back chair, while she catechised us in turn, first upon the Church Catechism, afterwards on the discourses of the day; while Aunts Janet and Margaret sat by listening.

I am sure you will admit this was a trial to a risible young person like myself. There was I, towering above the other two, at the head of the class, as it were; next came Tabitha, with her close cap, and clean apron, and false front of little curls, bobbing to and fro with an approving gesture at each question her mistress put. Then came poor old Timothy, his white head bowed, and his pink, shrivelled face bent downwards with intent gaze on the pattern of the carpet at his feet. Good, faithful old man! he had gone through the same ordeal every Sunday these forty years, and, I believe, would have felt guilty of breaking the Fourth Commandment had he missed it. I was surprised to hear how well they both answered, and was sobered down into a becoming state of gravity by seeing the really earnest way in which they looked upon this Sunday exercise, only second, I fancy, to the church-going itself.

You will see that I was beginning to get more contented in my temporary home. The sun shone, for one thing; no fog or clouds, save lovely fleecy ones, for weeks together. Moreover I received letters from home, begging me to return for Christmas. Ned would meet me at York; so there was a limit to my visit; only for two months more at the most! But, unfortunately, there was a paragraph in Ned's letter which stirred me up to a course of action I even now blush to write of. The sentence was this: "We shall be awfully glad to have you home again, old girl, but (between ourselves) we shall feel it rather a cut to the family if you come back without having had a chance even of saying *no*. Mother gets so many inquiries about you of a Sunday, coming out of kirk, that she has left off going for a bit, till she has something to tell them; and as for Joan, and Polly, and Nell, they are getting unbearable, tossing their heads and saying, Mother should have sent them; they wouldn't have been so slow about it as poor old Kitty."

Now, of course this was all nonsense, and I felt it; but who doesn't know that many a girl has been shamed into matrimony by brothers' chaff and wounded pride?

The effect on me was, I am sorry to say, still worse. Matrimony might wait, but the chance of saying no mustn't. There were only two months to do it in; I must bestir myself.

And so I did, wicked, heartless, despicable girl that I was. I had never had a chance before of trying my powers of fascination, so there

was the charm of novelty, too, in the attempt. The minister came oftener and oftener to the Grange, and I was always there to welcome him, always ready to respond to his remarks, and to catch up and enter into his train of thought, and, above all, always glad to sing to him in the twilight.

As for him, he grew young in the process. There was a new light in his eyes which lightened his whole face. There was a happy ring in his voice, and rarely, very rarely, a smile crept round the corners of his mouth.

You must not think I was bold and forward. I could not have been that, I hope; and, certainly, it would have spoiled my chance. No; I made a study of him, as one might of a difficult piece of music, and thought I knew him perfectly.

The triumph came more quickly than I expected, before the first month was up. It was on a Sunday afternoon. I should say that he had been with us as usual the previous evening, and I had laughingly asked him if he would like me to sing of his namesake, as we sat over the fire with my aunts in the dusk. And then I had given, with a good deal of real feeling, that touching song, "John Anderson, my Jo," thinking, in reality, of my own dear father and mother all the time.

The minister's face flushed crimson as I sang. I could just see that by the firelight; and when he bade me good-night, I thought he would never have let my hand go.

Well, to return to that Sunday afternoon. I knew something must be coming when the minister joined us after the second service, and Aunt Mary said to me, as we reached the iron gate, "I'll no catechise you to-day, niece Kate; Mither Anderson is going to stay to tea, and he'll kindly do it for me, and with muckle more skill, I ween."

I thought I detected a sly smile in Aunt Mary's grey eyes, and felt rather nervous. However, we reached the bridge in safety; then, as my aunts passed over, Mr. Anderson said to me, "Will you take another turn on the drive, Miss Donald? It will be a fine sunset after the storm." So we turned together, and he began at once, in a low, deep voice, impressive in its earnestness.

"I wanted to thank you," he said, "for what you sang last night. I am sure you would not have sung it cruelly or wantonly; you are too good for that; and you could not have done it ignorantly. I went home under the starlight a new man, and thanked God for his goodness in sending me that priceless treasure, a true wife; tell me that I did right."

He paused, and seized my hand, and looked into my face with that deep, piercing look which, as I foretold you, I should some day know to my cost.

Oh, for the last month back again! Oh, for the crushing shame and remorse of that awful moment of retribution!

Tremblingly I raised my eyes, hardly daring to meet his, and faltered out, "I was cruel, and base ; I did not mean it so."

He threw my hand from him so roughly that it almost made me cry out, and saying, in a hoarse voice, "Child, you have done a wicked deed ; may the Lord have mercy on you," strode away.

For me, I stood there dizzy and bewildered. What had I done ? Surely I had murdered some one, or worse ! This crushing nightmare-sense of despair, shame, and remorse came from no slight cause. Yes ; I had killed a human heart ; that was it. If the heart is dead, is not that murder ?

But people kill hearts lightly, and go unpunished. Yes, here, maybe ; we do not hang for that sort of murder ; but hereafter ?

And the heart of a good man, too, and one who trusted me. Oh, the ugly deed !

Sick at heart, I sat me down on the damp grass under the hedge, and thought it all over—my wiles, my triumph, my despair—till my head felt fit to burst ; and at last, seeing the curtains of night closing round me, and the brilliant stars overhead looking down on my shame with their million eyes, I took fright, and, rising with a little cry, ran along the drive and up through the garden to the house. No one saw me come in, so I rushed to my room, locked the door, and threw myself with my wet garments on the bed.

Presently came a knock, and eager pleading for admission. "Where was Mr. Anderson gone ? and why didn't I come to tea ? and where had I lingered so long ?"

"He is gone home, and I have a dreadful headache, and want to be quiet," I said ; "please leave me alone." So saying, I turned a deaf ear to all further troublings, and at last, worn out, fell into a troubled slumber.

III.

I AWOKE early next morning in dreadful pain. Lying all night in my soaking garments, what wonder that my limbs ached, and my head throbbed to distraction. I got up, however, and dressed as best I could, and dragged my weary steps to the cold parlour. There I was accosted by kind Aunt Janet first.

"Why, what ails ye, my puir bairn ? Ye're looking jist like a ghost, with yer pale face, and yer great black eyes ; and ye're shaking like ony quaking grass."

"I think I must have taken cold," I said, my teeth chattering as I spoke.

"An' nae more'n was to be expected," said Aunt Mary, severely. "If young women will be gadding about sweethearting so late, nae wonder they come shaking to breakfast next morn."

The colour rushed to my face for a moment, as I answered, with a

bitter laugh : "Out sweethearting, Aunt Mary ! A likely thing here, unless Methuselahs turn sweethearts."

"Nae, nae, my bairn," said Aunt Janet, with a kindly shake of her head, "ye're nae gaing the right gate to talk in sic a manner of sae worthy a man as our gude minister. He's nae sae old in years as in looks, for I ken his age right well. Didna I take him in my ain arms when he was but a bit babe, and when his bonny mother (more bonny than gude) said I might keep him an' welcome, and his puir father the whiles looking on sae grave to hear her say sic an unnatural word? There be waur things than years, bairn, to tak' the youth out o' a man, and for my part I love him the better for his sorrows."

How utterly miserable were the next few days ! Worse, a thousand times worse, than the ennui of the earlier part of my visit. That seemed a haven of rest to look back upon now, compared with the torturing remorse of my present state of mind. Moreover, I was really very ill, though struggling against it. My aching head and limbs kept me wakeful at night ; I lost all appetite ; for the first time since my remembrance my strength failed me, and one turn on the long drive would leave me quite exhausted.

Besides all this, I missed terribly the excitement of the Vicar's daily visits. In fact, I began to find out that they had been more to me than I had known, and that, in trying to win his heart, I had lost a bit of my own. In truth, I rather doubt whether I could have succeeded as I had done, unless this had been the case. He was not a conceited youth, easily flattered into the belief that he had inspired an ardent affection, but, on the contrary, an earnest, and therefore a humble man, who would surely have detected the base coin from the true, had there not been a mixture, however slight, of the genuine metal in it.

And so it came to pass that, what with growing weakness, torturing remorse, and ungratified longing for a meeting and reconciliation with the good man I had so wronged, my life became a burden to me. My aunts grew frightened at last at my pale cheeks, and hollow eyes, and hacking cough, and sent for the doctor. He decided that a neglected cold had settled on my lungs, and ordered strict nursing. So I took to my bed entirely, and felt no wish to leave it for a long while to come.

I have lived to be thankful for that new and trying experience. Strong in my own strength, joyous in the high spirits of youth, it seems to me that the higher spiritual part of my nature had lain unstirred till now. I had taken the manifold good gift ; that fell to my share as a matter of course, and with but little gratitude or thought for the thousands of my suffering and sorrowing sisters and brothers in this great complex world of ours. My eyes heretofore had been fixed solely on the sunny side of the picture ; now I was getting a glimpse into the shadowy one, more sombre, but more heart-stirring with its dark depths.

I am sure I should never have known the true value of my aunts, had it not been for this illness. As for Aunt Janet, she was kindness and unselfishness itself. She would sit for hours together at my heavily curtained window, bolt upright in her high-backed chair, plying her knitting busily. How I got to love the click of the steel pins, and the salutation, "Well, my bairnie, and how are ye the morn?"

Lying day by day contemplating that pale and furrowed face, with such a tender glance sometimes in the clear grey eyes, and lines of sad experience about the firm-set mouth, I used to amuse myself with weaving out possible romances for my aunt in her past life, and, with an invalid's restless petulance, grew quite worried at being unable to decide which was the true one. At last I got hold of the right thread, and this was how it came about.

It was a Saturday afternoon, dull and grey, and I had been lying with my eyes half closed, watching Aunt Janet, till at last I saw her knitting fall idly on her lap (a most unusual piece of indolence, even for a moment, with her), and the grey eyes soar away out through the small-paned window across over the flat wet meadow, to the misty hills beyond, while the sad lines deepened round her mouth, and a puzzled expression wrinkled itself on her forehead.

Suddenly I broke the stillness.

"Has Mr. Anderson been here to-day, auntie?" I asked.

Surely my words had jumped, as it were, with her thoughts, for there was the surprised start of recognition, as she answered:

"An' what made ye ask that for the noo, bairn, when it was just what I was a puzzling o'er myself. Nae, nae, he hasna been once sin' that Sunday night when ye caught yer chill. That waur an uncanny sort o' evening, I reckon, for he has looked mair like a ghost than onything else ever sin', as well as yerself. And his sermons hae been all o' sic a dreary turn, that as Timothy says, 'Ye'd think there were nae sae muckle as ain honest man left in the world to listen to him.'"

A sudden resolve took hold of me. I would confess it all to good Aunt Janet, and lift some of the load of guilt off my penitent heart.

"Auntie, that is all my fault. I made him believe I loved him, and then told him it was a lie. No wonder he does not believe in any one's truth after that."

Quietly and bitterly I spoke. I would not waste idle words in any attempt at self-excuse. Besides, what room was there for them?

Aunt Janet turned quickly towards me, the angry flush springing up over the white furrowed face, and the indignant flash to her eyes, making her look young again.

"You did sae evil a deed o' yer ain wicked will, niece Kate?" she asked in sharp, stinging tones.

"Of my own wicked will," I answered doggedly. "What else was there for me to do?"

"Muckle, muckle, bairn. Ye'd better hae gone and worked in the fields wi' Timothy; ye'd better hae cracked stones by the road-side; ye'd better hae done onything honest, than sae ill a deed as that. Ah, puir laddie, my heart greets sair for ye! Shall I tell ye, girl, what ye've done? Here was a lad who had a mother once more bonny far then yersel; and he loved his mother as sic quiet folk will, beyond all the world beside. But she was no sae gude as she might be, and went away frae him and his gude father, killing the one, and leaving the other a broken-hearted lad. She is dead now, poor soul. Maybe she repented her ill deeds in time. We'll hope sae, anyhow. But it made the lad old afore his time; and though he did his work faithfully, the light was gane out o' his life for mony a day. Muckle I troubled about the puir bairn, for I lo'ed his father weel (Aunt Janet's secret out at last!)—but we'll no talk o' sic bygone things the noo—sae I begged my sisters to ask ye here, hoping, maybe, I canna tell why, there might be a liking atween ye baith. And when I saw how it all sped, my heart grew light again, for I thought, she'll make him a bonny wife and a gude, and heal over the old sore. Ah, child, ye've done muckle ill wi' yer songs and false smiles. And woe is me that I ever set eyes on ye here!"

Aunt Janet's voice trembled as she finished, and, unheeding the passionate sobs that burst from my overcharged heart, she left the room. Left me to ponder over it all. The true, trampled heart I had made sport of, the saddened life of the man, still in his prime, that I might have cheered and brightened. Over and over again I pictured it all. Things as they had been, things as they were, things as they might have been.

Oh, if he would but ask me again, what a different answer I would give! But he would not. Most likely his love had turned to hate long ere this: he was too true himself to love a woman who could act so deliberate a lie.

The doctor found his patient much worse that night, and no wonder. After the terrible mental excitement I went through, the exhaustion was so great that my state became really precarious.

Dear Aunt Janet returned with a gentle, tear-stained face to my bed.

"Forgive me, bairnie," she said, in a broken voice; "it waur all my doing, and I should ha' known better. But the auld pain got the grip o' me again, which it had nae business to do, after sae mony years and sae muckle striving. Ah, we are but frail mortals, bairnie; but ye'll forgive me, I ween?"

I could but smile feebly, and press the dear bony old hand that I held. But all through the long hours of that night Aunt Janet was by my bed, administering the frequent cordials, smoothing my pillow;

yes, and what touched me more than all, kneeling by my bed-side when she thought I was dozing, and praying for me.

I do not like to write of my own thoughts that night. It is a sacred remembrance, hid away in the depths of my heart ; not idle there, I hope, but ever present to help me in life's journey heavenward.

And so the crisis passed. I had gone through the Valley of Humiliation, and thence through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and found at last, as good Christian did, daybreak and sunrise on the other side.

The first time I was allowed to leave my room was on Christmas Eve. The good, kind doctor was anxious I should have a more cheerful spot to spend my Christmas in than my poor, musty, dreary-looking bedroom. So I was well wrapped up in soft woollen shawls, and he himself carried me to the drawing-room, where blazing logs were kindled on the hearth, and where Tabitha had, in the kindness of her heart, stuck about some bright holly, to make it look a bit cheerful, as she said. And, indeed, to me it seemed a paradise of comfort after my long confinement in my dismal chamber.

An arm-chair of the luxurious, lounging sort, the first ever seen in my aunts' house, had been borrowed for me, and a tempting tea-tray was set out on the little table by its side. They were all too good to me I felt, and quiet tears *would* roll down my cheeks in my weakness ; but the doctor said they would do me good.

Just then came a ring at the bell, and a voice I knew inquired anxiously for Miss Donald at the hall-door. I looked appealingly at Aunt Janet. She understood, and said : " May she see the minister, doctor ? "

" Yes, if she please. He is not an exciting person, I take it," with a droll look in his eyes.

So saying he took his leave, and Aunt Janet ushered in the vicar.

I was very weak, you know, which must be my excuse ; and I had such a longing for forgiveness. So, directly he came up to my chair, I put out my poor, thin hands, and exclaimed through my tears, as though I had been a penitent naughty child, " Oh, do forgive me ; I will really try and be good."

He could not speak, but his lip trembled, and he grasped my white hand so warmly that I knew I was forgiven. The old cold hand-shake was already a thing of the past. We were all silent for a few minutes, till at last the minister looked up devoutly, and said, " Thank God ! "

Those two words seemed at once to break the spell. We could talk now. Talk of the happy Christmas-time, and of the many happy faces the yule-logs blazed upon that evening. Mr. Anderson had just returned from the workhouse, where the little folk were rejoicing in buns and sugared tea *ad libitum* (a treat of my aunts, as accidentally leaked

out), and a Christmas-tree full of presents to follow. We all grew quite merry. I had never heard the vicar talk so fluently before ; and, as I gazed at him from my corner, I thought his face was glorified by a new light, in spite of the added lines of past suffering on his brow.

For myself, my spirit felt almost too light and happy to be kept within bounds. It was so delightful to be well again, and at peace with my friends, and in the company of him I loved : for I no longer doubted on that head.

But there was a word I wanted to say before my mind would be *quite* at rest. So, as they were all going into the other room to supper, leaving me in my cosy arm-chair, I glanced up at the minister, who was holding the door open for the old ladies to pass on before him, and said, with an attempt at playfulness, "Will you stay with me a minute, please ; I want to confess."

So the door closed on my aunts, and he came gravely back to the hearth-rug. I began to feel rather frightened now the time was come, he looked so sad and earnest. It was no use ; I must dash into the midst of it at once.

"I wanted to tell you," I said, hurriedly, "how miserable I have been about what I said that Sunday." Then came a full stop. I had not considered beforehand how difficult it would be to say just what I wanted, and no more.

A spasm passed over his face as he said, "The less said of that the better now. I, too, was cruel and hard. It was folly to dream such an one as you could really care for a worn-out old fellow like me, old in sorrow, if not in years. But we will not mar our joy at having you amongst us again by painful remembrances. You will forgive my hard words when you know my history ; it would tire you to hear it now."

"I know it," I said, "and I have hated myself more than I can say for adding to your heavy burden."

"'Twas a trial I needed," he answered, sadly. "Believe me, Miss Donald, we get no more such teaching than is good for us. One idol had been dethroned, and I was setting up another."

"Yes," I said, bitterly, "and you found your idol was but wood, straw, and stubble ! I, too, have had hard but blessed teaching. Only my punishment is for life, seeing that you will never believe in me again."

"Who am I to judge another ?" he answered, sadly. "If my idol was cast down I have found a human soul which, erring or not, I love, and shall love, unselfishly I trust, for ever."

I looked at the calm, sad face, and it seemed to me the noblest face I had ever known. I listened to the self-renouncing, faithful words, and my heart would no longer keep silence.

"But I love too," I said, "and I am not so good as you. I cannot love unselfishly."

"Poor child !" he said, still gazing into the fire, not glancing at my

face, or he surely could not have mistaken me. "But yours cannot be in vain. You may be tried for a time, but the young man, if he be worthy of you, will never let slip such a prize."

"But I don't want any young man. And I am not a prize at all; only a poor battered thing, not worth any one's picking up!" I answered, in a sad, passionate voice.

He glanced round at me now, attracted, perchance, by the sorrowful tone in which I spoke. And I suppose my looks betrayed me, for, he gave a little start, and then, looking into my tearful eyes, said hurriedly,

"Do you really mean it? Can it be that my hungry heart shall be fed at last? My cheerless home brightened? My life made glorious?"

What happened after that I don't quite remember. But I know I was carried off to my chamber at an early hour in a perfect maze of happiness, which lasted through all the night; but where dreams began and facts ended, I can hardly say.

Looking back now on all that has happened since then, I find cause for nothing but gratitude. We have had our troubles, of course, but they have drawn us closer together. People tell me my husband grows younger every year, and in truth I think they're right. I am only afraid now that he'll get too young for his wife, for the management of four strong, healthy boys is somewhat sobering.

Aunt Janet lives with us, and the children call her Granny; and I am sure she could not have been fonder of them had they been her own offspring in truth. Especially Ned, who is the image of his paternal grandfather, they say.

My other two aunts still live on at the Grange, and Timothy and Tabitha still serve them. The old horse lay quietly down in the field and died one day, and not long after the sympathetic old coach fell to pieces.



LOTOS EATERS.

FACT and fancy have been aptly enough designated the prose and poetry of life ; for one embodies the sober truth, hard, stern, and unpleasant as it may be, whilst the other is merely the creation of a dream ; beautiful and fair to behold, but unable to bear the fierce test of reality. In youth the bright illusion claims us for its own, and we wander hand in hand with it through the Elysian fields, of which it alone seems to bear the magic key. There the turf is ever verdant, and the sun shines on paths easy to tread, and the flowers which bloom around us are immortal—far transcending those of earthly mould.

The enchantress who rules these goodly realms pictures the future before us in such glowing colours, and grants our desires so freely, that we can but own her sway. In our inexperience and self-confidence, we believe that all things are possible, and so too frequently blind ourselves to the real earnest life-work which awaits us. Thus, the young warrior in imagination wins his spurs in his first encounter, but is oblivious of the dreary night-watches, privations, and fatigue that have to be met and endured ere he gains the tilted field. Many fall beside him, worn out, with aching hearts and broken spirits, sick with hope deferred, wearied with grasping at shadows ; but he heeds not the warning, for ever onwards flits the ignis-fatuus of his brain, bearing him farther and farther into the fairy land of promise.

So it oftentimes befalls us all that we see, through the rosy mist which veils our senses, the goal with its glittering prizes, and reck not of the dark, toilsome struggles which intervene between us and them. Our lives are unwritten poems, and fancy whispers that we may inscribe them in letters of gold, for all time. She sends us forth to the battle clad in the bright panoply of youth and hope, giving us the earth for a possession, its honours and wealth for a reward.

But alas ! this ideal is far too perfect for ordinary use, as we soon find in our first serious endeavour to accomplish the stern hard work which falls to every man's lot. We then learn that the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, but that we must one and all toil, strive, and suffer ere we can hope to obtain the guerdons wayward fancy had already given us with such wondrous facility. One by one, our radiant visions fade, and our hopes go down, whilst our armour of proof becomes dented and hacked in the fierce strife where reality first claims our allegiance. The poetry of youth, with all its fair promises and unfulfilled longings, is exchanged for the dry, stubborn, common-place duties of daily life, often too essentially prosaic and monotonous. Gradually we begin to discover that the pathway to fame

and distinction is fraught with many perils, and that but few prosper therein. As craftsmen of the world, and members of that great guild whose watchword is "progress," work, aye, hard work, must be our portion, and that, too, with somewhat more durable materials than those woven in Fancy's airy loom.

The rigid moralist who enforces this stern code is Fact, the plain, straightforward sister of Fancy. She shows us things as they are, divested of all spurious attractions, bidding us confront them bravely with a loyal heart, fearing nothing, and that every selfish inclination conquered, every obstacle overcome will bring it own reward.

Not as lotos eaters, or dreamers, reveling in an impossible Utopia, but as toilers ready to put our hand to any task, however arduous or severe, that may fall to our lot, will existence be complete enough to serve as a prelude to the all-perfect Hereafter.

The solemn duties and noble aims offered to our riper years more than counterbalance the lost visions of childhood. For, although insignificant the destiny or humble the state, it can always be dignified by a willing spirit and steadfast purpose. Of all the dazzling pictures ever wrought in dreamland there is not one half so fair as the grand lesson taught by Experience, when she shows us our heritage of toil and sorrow, and tells us to glorify it by patient endurance and strength. Not yielding to circumstances, as cravens or bondsmen, but learning to face the inevitable with a calm courage, and do our best therein; leaving the result to ONE who orders all things both wisely and well.

That as workers now we may hope to realize these lost dreams when our appointed task is finished. No longer visionary and wayward as the fancies of our early days, but draped in all the imperishable lustre and splendour of immortality.



